

NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK NOMINATION

NPS Form 10-900

USDI/NPS NRHP Registration Form (Rev. 8-86)

OMB No. 1024-0018

SKIDMORE/OLD TOWN HISTORIC DISTRICT

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United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

1. NAME OF PROPERTY

Historic Name: Skidmore/Old Town Historic District (Revised Documentation)

Other Name/Site Number: N/A

2. LOCATION

Street & Number: Multiple

Not for publication: N/A

City/Town: Portland

Vicinity: N/A

State: Oregon

County: Multnomah

Code: 051

Zip Code: 97204

3. CLASSIFICATION

Ownership of Property

Private: X

Public-Local: X

Public-State: ___

Public-Federal: ___

Object: ___

Category of Property

Building(s): ___

District: X

Site: ___

Structure: ___

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing

55

1

1

57

Noncontributing

21 buildings

22 sites

___ structures

1 objects

44 Total

Number of Contributing Resources Previously Listed in the National Register:

Name of Related Multiple Property Listing: N/A

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4. STATE/FEDERAL AGENCY CERTIFICATION

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this ___ nomination ___ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria.

Signature of Certifying Official

Date

State or Federal Agency and Bureau

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of Commenting or Other Official

Date

State or Federal Agency and Bureau

5. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that this property is:

- Entered in the National Register
- Determined eligible for the National Register
- Determined not eligible for the National Register
- Removed from the National Register
- Other (explain):

Signature of Keeper

Date of Action

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6. FUNCTION OR USE

Historic:	Domestic Commerce/Trade Government Social Religion Recreation & Culture Health Care Landscape Industry Transportation	Sub:	multiple dwelling, hotel business, professional, organizational, financial institution, specialty store, restaurant, warehouse city hall civic, meeting hall religious facility, church school theater, music facility, work of art hospital, medical business plaza, street furniture/object manufacturing facility, industrial storage rail-related, water-related, pedestrian related
Current:	Domestic Commerce/Trade Social Government Health care Recreation & Culture Landscape Industry Transportation Work in progress	Sub:	multiple dwelling, hotel business, professional, organizational, specialty store, restaurant, warehouse civic fire station, public works clinic museum, outdoor recreation, monument/marker, work of art park, parking lot, plaza, street furniture/object manufacturing facility, industrial storage rail-related, pedestrian-related redevelopment

7. DESCRIPTION

ARCHITECTURAL CLASSIFICATION: Late Victorian: Italianate, Romanesque, Gothic, Renaissance
 Late 19th & 20th Century Revivals: Italian Renaissance, Classical
 Late 19th & 20th Century American Movements: Commercial Style
 Other: Utilitarian, Richardsonian Romanesque, Sullivanese, Stripped Classical,
 Second Renaissance Revival, Queen Anne Italianate

MATERIALS:

Foundation: Brick, stone, concrete
 Walls: Brick, concrete, wood, metal (cast iron, ornamental sheet metal), stucco
 Roof: Metal, asphalt, bituminous
 Other: Glass

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SUMMARY

Portland's Skidmore/Old Town Historic District is nationally significant under National Historic Landmark Criterion 1 for its historical associations with the early development and economic growth of the Pacific Northwest's most important urban center of the last half of the nineteenth century. Portland's mercantile houses, commission agents, steamship companies and financial institutions, clustered along Front and First streets in and near the present Skidmore/Old Town Historic District, supplied the goods, services and trade connections that not only supported the development of western Oregon, but that of the greater Pacific Slope region. Skidmore/Old Town's historic commercial buildings memorialize Portland's position as a commercial entrepôt that linked a large dependant hinterland to national and global economic systems, and highlight the sometimes under-emphasized role of key urban centers in facilitating the settlement and development of the western United States. The district also served as a major West Coast locus for the provision of important "social services" and related urban functions oriented to the working classes, and in some cases ethnic minority groups, including: lodging for itinerant workers, sailors, and loggers; union halls; reading rooms; missions and chapels; ethnic publishing houses; and various popular entertainment and vice venues like saloons, gambling halls, burlesque houses, and brothels. Finally, Skidmore/Old Town's late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century transition from commercial core to Skid Road—an association it has yet to fully shed—exemplifies the changes in urban spatial organization seen in port cities across the nation whereby central business districts and high-status residential areas migrated away from historic waterfront areas which subsequently suffered from neglect, disinvestment, and loss of historic fabric through public "improvement" projects.

The district is equally significant under National Historic Landmark Criterion 4 for the exceptional architectural values of its mid- and late-nineteenth-century cast-iron commercial buildings—one of the finest collections in the nation and perhaps the most outstanding in the Far West. These two to four-story primarily Italianate structures work in concert with sympathetically scaled and designed late nineteenth-century Richardsonian Romanesque and early twentieth-century buildings to define the rich urban character that marks it as a national treasure. With elaborate decorative elements echoing Italian Renaissance designs, Skidmore/Old Town's "Commercial Palaces" notably contribute to Portland's architectural distinctiveness and collectively reflect both the economic success of its early businesses, and the high cultural aspirations of its citizens and leaders.

The Skidmore/Old Town District was listed on the National Register in 1975 and designated a National Historic Landmark in 1977. Neither nomination form included determinations fully comparable to current contributing/noncontributing categories.

Describe Present and Historic Physical Appearance.**SETTING**

The Skidmore/Old Town Historic District is located in the Central City area of Portland, Oregon. It is situated on the west bank of the Willamette River, where the Burnside Bridge meets downtown Portland. Here, the Portland townsite, platted beginning in 1845 with streets oriented to the flow of the Willamette River and magnetic north, meets Couch's Addition, platted beginning in 1850 with streets oriented to true north, creating an offset of about twenty degrees. The district is bisected by W Burnside Street, a major arterial that divides the city's west side into northwest and southwest quadrants.

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The district encompasses seventeen complete city blocks and seven partial blocks within an area of approximately forty-two acres. Commercial functions, including office, retail, light industry and warehouse uses predominate, with more than half of the district's properties currently dedicated to these uses. Housing accounts for approximately 14 percent of the total land use, and vacant land or parking lots account for 28 percent. The easterly portion of the district is defined by open space along the Willamette River, with a total of 4.5 acres in Waterfront Park. To the west, on the north side of Burnside Street, the district overlaps with the New Chinatown/Japantown Historic District, its similarly scaled nineteenth- and early twentieth-century structures complementing those of Skidmore/Old Town and creating a more-or-less integrated and identifiable historic central city area generally referred to as "Old Town." To the north and northwest lies the still transforming "River District," long devoted to industrial uses but increasingly dominated by high-density residential uses. To the south and southwest lies Portland's modern central business district, with a mix of generally larger-scale, historic and modern commercial structures, including the city's highest skyscrapers.

The boundaries of the district were drawn to include a significant concentration of historic nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century buildings, most of which retain a high degree of integrity. The period of significance begins in 1857, the construction date of the oldest extant resource in the district and ends in 1929, with the completion of the Willamette River seawall, which forced demolition of the Willamette River wharves extending from the trade houses along the east side of Front Street. Of the 101 resources recorded in the district, fifty-seven are classified as contributing and forty-four as noncontributing. Eighteen of the contributing properties are individually designated as local historic landmarks. Of the noncontributing properties, twenty sites are vacant.

HISTORIC AND PRESENT ARCHITECTURAL AND URBAN CHARACTER OF SKIDMORE/OLD TOWN

The Skidmore/Old Town Historic District is significant for its exceptional mid-nineteenth- to early twentieth-century commercial buildings. They present a broad range of commercial architectural styles that lend variety to the district's urban character, while working in concert to create a cohesive and distinct historic sense of place. The district includes a variety of styles, the most predominant being the Victorian Italianate, Richardsonian Romanesque and Commercial styles, but includes buildings in other styles such as Victorian Gothic and twentieth century Century Classical, as well as transitional expressions and amalgams. But the most noteworthy and defining elements of the district's historic character derive from its Victorian-era masonry and cast-iron façade buildings, primarily in the Italianate style. The district's cast-iron structures are the backbone of a distinctive historic cityscape marking Portland's first commercial core. This collection is one of the largest and best preserved in the American West.¹

¹ The definition and usage of the term "cast-iron building" is not uniform in architectural and historic preservation discourse. This nomination generally uses the term in the somewhat flexible sense defined by Antoinette Lee: "primarily a commercial structure with at least one story of cast-iron components in the façade – in other words, a façade which is defined more by cast iron components than by brick, stone, or timber," "Cast Iron in American Architecture," in H. Ward Jandhl, ed., *The Technology of Historic American Buildings: Studies of the Materials, Craft Processes, and the Mechanization of Building Construction* (Washington: Foundation for Preservation Technology, 1983), 99. See discussion in "Portland and Skidmore/Old Town cast-iron buildings in perspective" in Section 8."

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Street, block and lot patterns: a fine-grained grid sets the framework

In 1845, surveyor Thomas Brown platted sixteen blocks just south of today's Skidmore/Old Town Historic District, on land owned by Francis Pettygrove and Asa Lovejoy, forming the nucleus of the Portland townsite. The 200-foot square blocks, squared with the northeasterly flow of the river, were divided into eight 50' by 100' foot lots and surrounded by 60-foot wide streets (the magnetic north-south streets, running parallel to the river, would later be widened to 80 feet). While this rectilinear street and block pattern was consistent with widespread nineteenth-century American planning practices, Brown's grid was unusually fine-grained. Its small (approximately one-acre) blocks and narrow street dimensions were the smallest of any major West Coast city and remain amongst the smallest in the nation today. In 1849-50, new town site owner Daniel Lownds had R. V. Short re-survey the city, platting over 100 new blocks, right to the northern edge of the original land claim (the south line of today's Ankeny Street). In 1850, John Couch platted a portion of his claim, abutting just to the north, in the same pattern, although at an off-set, with streets running true north-south, maintaining the grid's orientation to the river where it bends to the west. This pronounced shift in the grid in the center of the district created more complex street and block patterns in the otherwise regular grid that dominates downtown, and continues to provide spatial interest and unusual opportunities for views of historic building façades.²

Thus by the early 1850s, all of the land within the present historic district was platted (though not necessarily improved) with a fine-grained grid that was perhaps more suited to a small village than an aspiring metropolis. This was to have profound effects on the area's urban form and character. As the blocks filled in, the small lots, some of which were further divided into even smaller parcels with only 25-foot frontages, and fragmented ownership resulted in continuous street walls that were articulated by small, individual façades and storefronts and punctuated by frequent corners and streets. Where larger, one-quarter to full-block buildings were constructed, the block sizes limited their overall bulk and massing. Thus, over time, the historic block and lot pattern combined with narrow streets and generally two- to four-story building heights to create streetscapes with a strong sense of urban enclosure that were yet intimate and human-scaled. For the most part, the district retains these characteristics today; the historic structures, lot and street patterns continue to define the area's physical sense of place. Although a number of historic buildings have been demolished with the resulting vacant lots creating gaps in the urban fabric, inappropriately-scaled or otherwise incompatible development from after the period of significance, has not overwhelmed the district's historic character. The most salient intrusion is the fourteen-story One Pacific Square building (#68) built in 1989, that lies only partly within the district on its northern edge.

Over time the regularity and connectivity provided by the street grid has been altered by major public interventions, particularly by the elevated Burnside Bridge ramps at the center of the district which run west to Second Avenue. Although the structure is in one sense a physical disruption, it is still somewhat permeable, with pedestrian and light rail traffic flowing freely underneath the ramps along First Avenue (although it is closed to automobiles). The light rail MAX line links the north and south parts of the district to each other, the rest of downtown, and the east side of the Willamette River.

² E. Kimbark MacColl, *Merchants, Money, and Power: The Portland Establishment, 1843-1913* (Portland: The Georgian Press, 1988), 8-9; *1863 City Directory*, 6-7.

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Log cabins and Wood Frames: The Lost Frontier Village of the 1840s and 1850s

Portland's settlement-era architectural history began in the 1840s with a small concentration of simple log and wood structures bordering the bank of the Willamette River. In 1844 or 1845, Francis Pettygrove and Asa Lovejoy erected two of the earliest buildings in the city at the foot of present day Washington Street, two blocks south of the current historic district. Like most of Portland's first structures, they were log-built. One was serving as a dwelling and the other serving as a warehouse and store, the latter notable for its cedar shingle roof (and perhaps siding), a refinement that remained uncommon in the city's first few years.³ One of the most noted early buildings was the 1847 Greek revival home built for Capt. Nathaniel Crosby at the corner of First and Washington. It was constructed of pre-cut lumber shipped around the Horn from Maine.⁴ The location and date of construction of the first structure within the historic district proper is not known with certainty, but among the earliest were Capt. John Couch's warehouse and wharf, constructed in 1849 near the center of the historic district at the foot of present day Burnside Street and anchoring the northern edge of the nascent town. As in many western towns in their infancy, 1840s Portland architecture was something of a hodgepodge. The earliest surviving drawings and photographs of Portland's commercial streets show generally modest wood-frame buildings in utilitarian vernacular styles, often with faint suggestions of the Greek revival. None of Portland's 1840s structures, and very few from the 1850s, survive.

Brick and cast iron commercial palaces: defining the character of Skidmore/Old Town, 1850s to 1890s

By late 1850, an observer noted that Portland had not less than 150 houses, eighteen stores, six boarding houses and two churches.⁵ Front Street, which ran parallel to the river, served as the main commercial street and was home to most of the early town's more substantial buildings.⁶ The 1850s saw the construction of the City's first brick buildings, including the one-story F. B. Miles & Co. building on the southwest corner of Front and Pine (1853, demolished), the one-story Coleman Building built for \$9,500 at the southeast corner of SW Front and Oak (1853, demolished), and the Hallock and McMillen Building (1857, # 99), located at the northwest corner of the same intersection.⁷ Although it has been significantly altered, the Hallock and McMillen building, built by Portland's first architect, Absalom Hallock, is the oldest extant structure in the district and marks the beginning of the period of significance. The Delschneider Building (# 90) was completed in 1859 on the north side of Oak Street between Front and First Streets. This narrow, three-story (originally two-story) Italianate structure is the third-oldest surviving building on its original site in Portland. Its relatively simple cast-iron and wood stylings mark the beginning of a three-decade era of cast-iron construction in which the district's architectural character was defined, and for which it is justly famous.

By 1865, Portland's population numbered approximately 6,000. Front Street, and to a lesser degree First Street, were the primary commercial thoroughfares and the city could boast fifteen one-story, thirty-seven two-story,

³ MacColl, *Merchants, Money, and Power*, 8; Harvey Scott, *History of Portland* (Portland: Mason, 1890), 80-94.

⁴ Percy Maddux, *City on the Willamette* (Portland: Binfords & Mort, 1952), 18; William John Hawkins, III, *The Grand Era of Cast-Iron Architecture in Portland* (Portland: Binfords & Mort, 1976), 8.

⁵ Charles H. Carey, *General History of Oregon* (Portland: Binfords & Mort, 1971), 655.

⁶ Throughout the period of significance this thoroughfare was called *Front Street*, having been briefly known as *Water Street* in the 1840s. Its name was changed to *Front Avenue* in the mid-twentieth century. More recently, a section of Front Avenue, including the segment running through the historic district, has been renamed *Naito Parkway*. Generally, this road is referred to as *Front Street* in this nomination for consistency with historical sources. An exception is the list of contributing and noncontributing resources, where *Naito Parkway* is used.

⁷ Harvey Scott, *History of Portland* (Portland: Mason, 1890), chap. 5.

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and seven three-story brick commercial buildings.⁸ Portland's successful businessmen and their architects increasingly chose cast iron as a structural and ornamental building material, and cast-iron fronted, Italianate style trade houses began to line Front Street. Four architects known to be active in Portland by this time include: Absalom B. Hallock, mentioned above; Elwood M. Burton, who arrived ca. 1855; William W. Piper, who arrived in 1863; and John Nestor, who arrived in 1864. Harley McDonald was another early architect who did work in the district.⁹ During the decades of the 1870s and 1880s, the former village grew into a major West Coast city, with a central business district marked by substantial three- to four-story brick commercial buildings, predominantly in the Italianate style, with significant use of structural and decorative cast iron. In the 1880s at the peak of this development phase, the blocks between the Willamette River and Fourth Street were in-filled with solid masonry and cast-iron buildings replacing many first generation wood frame structures. Scores of blocks were architecturally unified by Renaissance-inspired arched and colonnaded cast-iron façades.¹⁰ First Street had emerged as a more genteel, retail- and office-oriented complement to Front Street which remained a bustling, working-waterfront area. Historians Terence O'Donnell and Thomas Vaughn evoked the flavor of Front Street in this era:

Coming ashore from a four-master or paddlewheeler and passing through the cavernous sheds, one came out onto cobbled Front Street to see on its far side these buildings, managing somehow to look both flamboyant and grave, filled with the activity of shipping offices, emporiums, saloons and oyster houses, glimmering in the rain.¹¹

Today, Skidmore/Old Town's historic architectural character is defined by a mix of nineteenth-century building types: Italianate-style commercial buildings with cast-iron façades that date from the late 1850s through the 1880s, and the more massive brick and stone Richardsonian Romanesque structures constructed during the following two decades. Several early twentieth century commercial style buildings add another sympathetic layer to the mix.

More than one-quarter of the extant buildings in the district were constructed in the Italianate style, ranging in height from one to four stories. Characteristic features include masonry bearing walls, bracketed cornices, and use of architectural cast iron and pronounced moldings on the façades. The brick walls were left exposed or covered with stucco. Arched openings and segmentally arched windows on the upper stories and bracketed cornices along the roofline were other defining features of this style. Commonly, windows pierced brick walls, and the pier between the windows was treated as a pilaster or was stuccoed to suggest a wide column. Upper-floor window arches were often capped with iron keystones, and iron decorations were placed at the capitals of the pilasters or in the spandrel panels between the arches.¹² Many of these buildings were of loft-type construction—creating flexible space usable for many retail, wholesale, warehouse and manufacturing uses.

The impressive Blagen Block, a four-story commercial palace constructed in 1888, remains from that era in Skidmore/Old Town (# 71). It was used by Marcus Whiffen in *American Architecture since 1780* to exemplify

⁸ Hawkins, *Grand Era of Cast-Iron Architecture*, 32.

⁹ Richard Ellison Ritz, *Architects of Oregon: A Biographical Dictionary of Architects Deceased—19th and 20th Centuries* (Portland: Grenhills, 1991) passim; Hawkins, *Grand Era of Cast-Iron Architecture*, 32.

¹⁰ William John Hawkins, III, "Befriending Your Cast Iron District", *Old Portland Today*, April 15, 1975, 14.

¹¹ Terence O'Donnell and Thomas Vaughn, *A Historical Sketch and Guide* (Portland: Oregon Historical Society 1963), 110.

¹² Hawkins, *Grand Era of Cast-Iron Architecture*, 20.

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the High Victorian Italianate style.¹³ Long occupied by the W. C. Noon sail-making and canvas products business, it represents a building type that once predominated in this section of the city. Its construction was not only ornate but substantial, including special steam elevators to carry heavy materials from the brick basement to the fourth floor.¹⁴

In 1882, Warren H. Williams, early Portland's most productive architect, designed the Allen & Lewis Block on SW Front (demolished). This building veered away from the more classical forms of the Italianate style, into a new style known as Modern Gothic, which blended medieval and "modern" design elements in eclectic ways. While it included typically Gothic pointed window openings and arches, unlike earlier Gothic-inspired design, it was adorned with geometric ornamentation bolted on to an otherwise typical cast-iron structure. The Bickel Block on SW Second and Ash (#91), constructed in 1883, experiments with Gothic motifs within the High Victorian Italianate Style. Other more lavish buildings included the Starr Block of 1882 and the Kamm Building of 1884, both four-story structures with observation towers that reached the same heights as church spires. The Kamm Building was also exceptional for Portland in combining various architectural styles, including modern Gothic, Romanesque, and general Victorian extravagance. Huge wooden figures of Atlas and Hermes supported the balcony and cornice, respectively, in a show of architectural opulence that was unprecedented at the time. These buildings unfortunately no longer exist.

Construction of special-purpose buildings increased beginning in the 1870s. A prominent and district character-defining example is the New Market Theater, built by Captain A. P. Ankeny and Andrew J. Watson in 1872 (# 45). It was designed by architects Piper & Burton and cost the substantial sum of \$100,000. With its huge cast-iron columns, arches, and wealth of decorative details, it was an impressive multi-purpose building that mixed retail commerce with entertainment and business concerns. It was considered an architectural wonder from the moment it opened to the public. The name was derived from the public market located on the ground floor. A 200' arcade passed through the building, lined with twenty-eight marble stalls. On the second floor, the great hall measured 60' by 100', with 35' ceilings, a perimeter balcony, 100 gas-lit crystal chandeliers and sconces, and 800 to 1,200 seats. It became the venue for great entertainers of the 1870s and 1880s. Today, the structure is intact and has been rehabilitated, although the interior was altered significantly. The building continues to rank as one of Portland's most significant structures, both in terms of design and its place in the city's early cultural life.

By the early 1890s, elegant buildings lined the streets in the Skidmore/Old Town Historic District from Front Street through Third Street. Approximately two hundred of them had cast-iron fronts or substantial iron decorations. Many of the cast-iron patterns echoed Italian Renaissance designs, with elegant free-standing columns topped by round arches and rusticated pilasters. The repeated pattern of free-standing columns created a distinctive sense of architectural coherence in the commercial district. On some blocks, the pattern dominated both sides of the street. The existing Smith Block of 1872 provides a glimpse of how the area must have looked, with row after row of unified façades (# 96, # 78). The Smith Block is the last remaining Portland structure to display a specific cast-iron pattern, introduced in the late 1860s, that was repeated on at least nine other buildings along First and Front Streets, north of Pine. The pattern included 12-foot high fluted Corinthian columns spaced seven feet nine inches apart and spanned by coffered arches decorated with flower medallions. It also included decorative spandrel panels of heads intertwined with foliage. Use of this pattern over approximately 1,000 linear feet of building fronts created an architectural unity in the district rarely seen in

¹³ Marcus Whiffen, *American Architecture since 1780, A Guide to the Styles* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1969), 97.

¹⁴ Heritage sign on Blagen Block, 30-34 NW First Avenue (no citation).

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American cities.¹⁵ By contrast, the Kamm Building, constructed on Pine between Front and First Streets approximately two decades later, displayed a more exuberant and eclectic variety of ornamentation and made a more individualistic architectural statement.

The 1889 Glisan Building (# 48) is probably the latest structure in the city that is defined by a predominant use of architectural cast-iron. Its design elements both echoed the past and pointed to the future, marking it as a transitional building. Small individual windows on the second floor, divided by brick piers suggesting columns, were characteristics of an earlier period. Similarly, the use of cast iron on the lower floor was typical of many buildings of the 1880s, with large display windows divided by smaller cast-iron columns at the two entrances. The building's decorations, however, were more prophetic of the 1890s than typical of the 1880s. The columns and pediments featured intertwining scroll designs, somewhat Art Nouveau in style. This would become the fashionable decorative trend of the 1890s. With this building, the "grand era" of cast-iron architecture came to a close. Approximately twenty structures from the cast-iron era remain in the Skidmore/Old Town area, "from the most remarkable period of early growth in the city."¹⁶

The Richardsonian Romanesque style began to replace the Italianate style beginning in the late 1880s. Seven remaining buildings in the district are in this style. This new style turned away from the hallmarks of the cast-iron era and introduced an aesthetic that had developed on the East Coast and was more suited to the era's increasingly large structures. Tall, narrow individual windows gave way to window bays between structural columns and large banks of windows. Walls were characterized by heavy brick and stone work rather than the more airy cast iron. Many Richardsonian Romanesque buildings had characteristically pronounced lower-story bases faced with heavy and rusticated stonework, as in the New Market Annex (# 46) and the Haseltine Building (# 36). The emerging Art Nouveau style, though not lending a predominant flavor to the district, introduced stylized decorative elements to buildings, such as the Skidmore Block (#72) and the Glisan Building (#48) that looked more organic than applied.

The period 1870-1899 represents a building boom in the Skidmore/Old Town Historic District. In terms of structures that exist today, the greatest numbers of buildings were constructed during the 1880s. There are nine remaining resources from the 1870s, seventeen from the 1880s, and eight from the 1890s. With the beginning of the twentieth century, construction activity in the district began to decline. Between 1900 and the end of the period of significance (1929), a total of twenty-two buildings remain.

Progress and decline: early 1900s to the Mid-Twentieth Century

In Portland, as in the rest of the country, architectural and engineering practices were undergoing rapid change and innovation as the nineteenth century drew to a close. The development of cast-iron building fronts and structural elements had paved the way for modular construction systems and the emergence of the modern steel skyscraper. Steel replaced cast iron as the material of choice, and proved to be a far more adaptable structural material. New forms of architectural expression also emerged, including the Commercial and Utilitarian styles. Simpler, more streamlined buildings were constructed in Skidmore/Old Town, with rectangular openings replacing arched window and door openings, among other changes. The detailing and decorative elements of these buildings were far less ornate and exuberant than their earlier counterparts. There are over a dozen of these late nineteenth- and twentieth-century Commercial style buildings in the district.

¹⁵ Hawkins, *Grand Era of Cast-Iron Architecture*, 48.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 20-21.

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From the earliest years, lodging establishments and small hotels dotted the district. They were built to serve business visitors to the commercial district and also the transient housing needs of itinerant laborers and men employed in the teeming waterfront commercial area. The earliest lodging structures were generally small and wood-framed, many converted from single-family houses and replaced over time by more substantial masonry buildings. Several examples of residential buildings from the turn of the century through the 1930s remain in the district, many in the Commercial style. Typically one to four stories tall, ground floors were designed for commercial uses, with lodging above. Of wood or wood and brick construction, these buildings often have Italianate flourishes, such as bracketed cornices, brick detailing, and arched windows. The three-story Fritz Hotel (# 18) built in 1913 on NW Third Avenue, is comparable in size, texture and materials with other lodging establishments of similar date within the district. Hotels and rooming houses were designed in several period revival styles, including substantial buildings such as the Western Rooms (# 34) in the Second Renaissance Revival style and Erickson's Saloon/Hotel (# 31) in the twentieth-century classical style, and smaller-scale buildings such as the Glade Hotel (# 17) in the twentieth-century Romanesque style. Accommodations ranged from the most basic to very comfortable, although the city's choicest hotel accommodations tended to now locate south of the district. In general terms, the lodging establishments constructed in the early 1900s, though of solid and elegant design, reflected the economic and social distinctions ingrained in Skidmore/Old Town's waterfront history and its evolution from a prime commercial district to a more transitional area.

As waterfront activity moved downstream and development and business activity focused on other parts of the core area, neglect set in for Portland's earliest commercial district and its old-fashioned buildings. Portland's newer, taller, more modern buildings were sited "uptown," which was considered a more fashionable and progressive area to do business. The area had become run down and public sentiment was turning negative. As a sign of the times, there was even an effort to move the beloved landmark Skidmore Fountain uptown, away from urban decay. A 1928 article in the *Oregonian* was scathing: "People go to New York and delight to prowl in the shabby old buildings of Greenwich Village; to New Orleans and revel in the ancient Creole district; to Los Angeles and enjoy the quaintness of the old Plaza mission district. They come home and affect disgust because the Skidmore Fountain is kept in a district that is old and shabby."¹⁷ Protests from preservationists saved the day, at least for the fountain, and it remains in its original location.

That same year—1928—demolition of cast-iron buildings began with the 1867 Bank of British Columbia, which occupied a triangular block between SW Ankeny and Vine Street (Vine was later vacated). The magnificent Kamm Block was razed in 1939. Many of the district's buildings by this time were underutilized, were being used for "dead" storage, or had converted to "flop houses." A combination of circumstances, including periodic flooding, the loss of shipping activities, business relocations, and bridge bypasses, had left the waterfront area blighted and neglected. City authorities implemented several major public infrastructure plans and waterfront projects to deal with these issues. These projects entailed demolition of dozens of cast-iron buildings along Front Street (now known as Naito Parkway). In 1941 and 1942, entire blocks were demolished on the east side of Front, including the 1882 Starr Block (between Pine and Oak), the 1882 Allen & Lewis Block (between Couch and Davis), the 1888 Dodd Block (between Ankeny and Vine), the 1879 Central Block (between Front and Ash), and the 1882 Cook's Building (just north of Ash). These demolitions were generally regarded as a sign of progress. While nostalgically recalling the glory days of the "Cavalcade of Front Street," Henry Reed yet believed sacrifices were necessary, writing in 1941:

¹⁷ Ibid., 162.

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*The Front Avenue project is Portland's greatest traffic undertaking...it will have other economic effects of importance. It will arrest the decline of the old business district, and if property owners show some of the spirit and enterprise of the city's founders, will result, in time, in more profitable use of property, and increased values.*¹⁸

In 1958 the *Oregon Journal* wrote optimistically about the changes wrought by the Front Avenue project, which would “promote industrial recovery...[and] rehabilitate a large section of downtown Portland.”¹⁹ Sadly, the anticipated changes failed to materialize as envisioned, and empty blocks throughout the district remained as parking lots. Just three years after its earlier article, the *Oregon Journal* said, “The parking lot expands its boundaries, they [historic buildings] stand out more defiantly than ever—not as simple-minded leftovers of the Gay Nineties, but as avenging angels. Glass and enlightened mass may have taken their toll, but those that remain remind us of something perhaps missing from the city's perfect new architecture.”²⁰

The Era of Preservation: Mid-Twentieth Century to the Present

Fortunately, the “avenging angels” described by the *Oregon Journal* continue to stand watch in the Skidmore/Old Town Historic District; depending on definition of terms, approximately twenty cast-iron buildings remain standing, according to architectural historian William Hawkins. Beginning tentatively in the 1960s and continuing with fits and starts to the present, preservationists, civic leaders, property owners and citizens have worked to improve our understanding of Old Town's history and architecture, implement preservation policies, and undertake renovation and rehabilitation projects. Since the designation of the historic district in 1975, investments by property owners, including the pioneering efforts of Bill Naito, who rescued many historic structures in the district and throughout the greater downtown, have generally maintained or improved the condition and integrity of the district's contributing structures.

Another preservation activity of importance was salvage of architectural artifacts from demolished structures. During the 1950s and 1960s, Portland preservationist Eric Ladd had the foresight to acquire cast-iron façades, columns and other decorative work from a number of buildings in and near the district.²¹ In the 1970s, with the formation of the advocacy group Portland Friends of Cast-Iron Architecture and the publication of William Hawkins' *The Grand Era of Cast Iron Architecture in Portland*, public awareness of the city's cast-iron architecture increased, and many salvaged cast-iron artifacts were acquired from Eric Ladd and reused in the district. For example, in 1984, columns from the New Market North Wing (demolished in 1956) were reinstalled in their original positions adjacent to the New Market Theater (#45), partially reconstituting the street edge-defining colonnade (some portions are reproductions molded from original pieces). Other artifacts were mounted on the exterior of the Fire Station (# 76) and incorporated into Ankeny Park and the arcade at the foot of Ankeny Street. Ladd's collection was subsequently purchased by the Portland Development Commission (PDC) for potential future use in public improvement and development projects in Old Town.

Building Alterations

According to city records, most of the recorded exterior changes in the Skidmore/Old Town Historic District were modifications/additions/removal of entrances and windows, “storefront” alterations, signage changes and

¹⁸ Henry E. Reed, *Cavalcade of Front Street* (Portland: Wakefield-Fries & Woodward, 1941).

¹⁹ Hawkins, *Grand Era of Cast-Iron Architecture*, 163.

²⁰ *Oregon Journal*, August, 21, 1961: 11.

²¹ See William Hawkins, Eric Ladd, Cast-Iron Collection Evaluation [n.d., ca. Sept 2007].

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various surface alterations (such as covering over cast ironwork).²² However, based on an examination of early photographs and field assessments, it is evident that many alterations were not recorded and some were more pervasive than the records indicate. Most major alterations, from the covering or removal of architectural decoration to partial or total demolition, took place in the mid-twentieth century. Beginning in the 1960s major rehabilitations, renovations, and seismic upgrades started occurring, with a noticeable spurt in such activity in the early and mid-1980s. More detailed descriptions of alterations are provided in the descriptions of individual properties below.

Streetscape Elements and the Public Realm

The design and material characteristics of Skidmore/Old Town's streetscape elements, including its paving materials, street lighting, signage and rain protections, gave pattern and texture to the early district and have continued to evolve over time. A basic description of these aspects of the public realm is important for understanding the historic and present physical contexts of the district.²³

The first streets in the district as in other parts of the city, were dirt, possibly with some gravel in the early years. An early street surface was "Nicholson Paving," blocks of end-grain wood. This was unsatisfactory because the material tended to float away during floods. Cobblestone paving was introduced in the 1870s and was often called "Belgian Block." Contrary to popular myth, most of these paving stones came from basalt quarries in St. Helens and elsewhere in the region rather than arriving as ballast in foreign ships. The full width of Front, First and Second Streets were paved with cobblestones for their full length within the district, as were portions of Oak, Pine, Couch, and Davis. Third Avenue had cobblestones in the center streetcar track bed. East/west streets not cobbled were "macadamized" (rolled aggregate and oil). In subsequent years, the streets were paved over with asphalt; in some cases cobblestones were removed and replaced with asphalt or concrete. Cobblestone paving remains beneath many asphalt-covered streets in and near the district. The cobblestones are salvaged and stored by the City when they are uncovered during street work and they are occasionally reused in public projects, as in the right-of-way improvements associated with the light rail line along First Avenue and in Ankeny Park.

The earliest sidewalks in the area were made of wood. Granite or basalt curbs were usually installed when cobblestone paving was introduced. Most wood walks continued through the turn of the nineteenth century, when they were replaced with concrete. 1903 was the earliest date found on concrete sidewalks existing in 1976. Many original concrete sidewalks appear intact with notable exceptions at intersections where handicapped ramps have been installed. Some granite and basalt curbs and iron horse rings remain. Until 1962, when Skidmore Fountain Plaza was developed, there were no special pedestrian areas in the district. There is little evidence of landscaping in the district during the nineteenth and early twentieth century, other than potted trees, balcony planters, and residential yards. Street trees are a recent phenomenon, beginning with building improvements in the early 1960s.

The first street lights were oil lamps on wood poles. Gas lights were first installed in 1859. The gas fixtures, made in New York, were of a design common in many cities – four-sided clear glass lamps on ornamental cast-iron standards. It is believed these were installed throughout most of the district, at least in the area south of

²² City of Portland, Bureau of Development Services, building permit records and land use review case files.

²³ Information in this subsection was drawn in part from *Skidmore Old Town Historic District Development Program, Implementation Schedule, Development Standards*, a document prepared in 1976 for the Portland Development Commission by Allen-McMath-Hawkins-Architects and Wallace K. Huntington, Landscape Architect.

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Burnside, and it is possible that Portland foundries made the poles. Gas lights were added to telephone poles after their introduction in the late 1870s and early 1880s. By 1885, electric street lights began replacing gas lights. The earliest ones were of the carbon arc type and were suspended from telephone poles at intersections and set on standards at mid-block. Through the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries a variety of lights were used as technology advanced and styles changed. Also, many businesses installed specially designed street lights in front of their own properties, a practice that has continued to the present.

The first effort toward establishing a standard downtown lighting system began around 1914. The fixture consisted of an ornamental cast-iron standard, with three glass balls arranged around the standard and a fourth ball on top. This "4-Ball" fixture was used throughout the downtown area. It is not known to what extent these fixtures appeared in the district, although it is likely they were on Third Avenue and possibly on other streets; a few are in place in front of the Blagen Block on NW First. The present "Downtown Ornamental" fixture began replacing the "4-Ball" fixture in 1925. Except on Burnside, they were never used in the district.

During the nineteenth century many buildings provided some form of rain protection to adjacent sidewalk areas. There were generally three basic types: awnings; wood or metal canopies supported by brackets and posts; and second-level wood porches supported by iron or wood posts at the curb line. Most historic examples have been lost, but many buildings continue to provide rain cover in the form of awnings and canopies of more recent construction. The awnings currently on the restored Freimann Kitchen Building (#89) and Freimann Restaurant Building (#84) replicate its original awnings, based on a historical image. Many buildings also had wrought-iron balconies attached at the window openings of their façades, most of which have since been removed.

Nineteenth century buildings were often identified by name and date with carved or cast lettering and numerals usually located in a central architectural feature at the top story. Advertising signs were predominantly painted signs directly on the building, or on wood or metal panels. Signage was also commonly applied as gold-leaf paint on storefront windows. In Portland's earliest years, street names were attached to the curbs of wooden sidewalks. Occasionally, they were painted or inscribed on buildings, as can be seen on the New Market Annex (#46) and the Haseltine Building (#36). Street names were attached to telephone poles after they were introduced in the late 1870s. Illuminated signs were seen soon after electricity came to the city in the 1880s. Neon signs were developed in 1926 and became a popular form of identification and advertisement. Signs became larger and were mounted on roofs or building walls and were visible for miles. Few of the larger signs remain today, a result of both changing styles and local regulations, although a number of faded and decaying, early twentieth-century painted advertisements are still visible on various buildings. The White Stag neon and bulb-lit sign facing NW Front (Naito Parkway) was erected in 1940 (# 93). Originally it was configured to advertise White Satin Sugar, before being converted in 1957 for the White Stag Company. In 1997 the sign was modified to advertise the Made in Oregon Company. The sign is both a visual icon and a designated local Historic Landmark.

Summary of Major Alterations to the Streetscape and Public Realm

In the contemporary era, there have been a number of significant changes to the streetscape, public spaces and the urban fabric in general. In 1960, Vine Street, the most northerly in the original townsite, was vacated. The present Skidmore Fountain Plaza and Ankeny Park were dedicated in 1962 in the Vine Street right-of-way and on the adjacent triangular block to the north, where the Bank of British Columbia once stood. Close to Ankeny Park, the seasonal Saturday Market opened in 1974 with a grant from the Metropolitan Arts Commission. It quickly became a local fixture, spreading out in right-of-ways and vacant lots south of W. Burnside. After the

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market opened, the condition of Ankeny Park began to deteriorate, mainly due to increased use and foot traffic. In the early 1980s, a National Park Service grant funded redevelopment of the park to provide a suitable space for cultural programs and exhibits. Turf was replaced with pavers, new lighting was installed, and the area was marked with salvaged cast-iron columns and arches.²⁴ In 2007, plans for new paving were approved for Ankeny Plaza as part of an effort to refurbish the popular public space in the center of the district.

In 1974, the decision to remove Harbor Drive and replace it with Tom McCall Waterfront Park was an important step in promoting the urban renaissance that the city has since experienced. The properties adjacent to the park now have views of and access to the Willamette River. Public amenities in Tom McCall Waterfront Park include trees, grassy areas that are used for seasonal festivals, and two memorial parks. A well traveled pedestrian and bicycle path alongside the river provides access through the eastern edge of the district. The MAX light rail line began service in 1986 from downtown Portland across the Willamette River to points east, winding through the historic district along SW First Avenue. Other changes wrought by a new focus on downtown revitalization in the 1970s and 1980s included: limitations on the creation of new parking; policies to maintain the historic street grid and blocks; and design regulations to promote active street-level storefronts. Both private and public funds were dedicated to rehabilitation projects. In 2007, as part of Waterfront Park improvements recommended through an extensive public process, changes were approved for the light rail (MAX) station under the Burnside Bridge on 1st Avenue. The changes included adding a new retail area to the west and a glass screening wall to the east of 1st Avenue in this heavily traveled area.

The Skidmore/Old Town Historic District also incorporates a newer memorial park on Waterfront Park. The Japanese-American Historical Plaza, dedicated in 1990, pays tribute to Japanese-American immigrants and their sacrifices during World War II. Sited a few short blocks away from what was once pre-war Japantown, it is defined by trees and a curving wall of large inscribed memorial stones along the Willamette River esplanade. Another war memorial is located further south along the waterfront, at the southern edge of the district. It is the Battleship Oregon Memorial Marine Park, a small (7,000' square foot) park that was formally dedicated in 1976 as part of the Bicentennial. The focus of the park is the mast from the battleship, which was given to the City of Portland in 1943. In the future, this site may be moved closer to the waterfront to enhance the maritime theme of the park.²⁵ In 2007, several alterations and public improvements were projected for construction in three phases in the Waterfront Park area, as follows: in the first phase, adding an event platform and shelter; a circular plaza with a water feature; a seawall overlook; and improvements to Ankeny Pump Station, including ornamental fencing. In the second phase, constructing a restroom; and in the final phase, extending the dock pier and constructing a floating dock into the Willamette River.

LIST OF CONTRIBUTING RESOURCES

Evaluations of individual historic district resources prepared for the original 1975 National Register and 1977 National Historic Landmark nominations were made under documentation and evaluation standards that have since been refined by the National Park Service (NPS). The nominations and supporting material used terminology that is not fully comparable with current "contributing" and "noncontributing" determination requirements.²⁶ Subsequent to 1977, the early rankings were "translated" into contributing or noncontributing

²⁴ Zari Santer, Portland Bureau of Parks, memorandum to Elisabeth Potter, Oregon SHPO files, October 20, 1983.

²⁵ City of Portland, Bureau of Parks, *Waterfront Park Assessment of Conditions and Issues*, April 2001.

²⁶ The resources were generally assigned one of the following rankings: Historic-Primary (occasionally "Primary Landmark"), Historic-Secondary, Compatible, Non-Compatible, Vacant or Parking. See 1975 and 1977 nomination forms and maps and "Portland Skidmore/Old Town Historic District Property Ownerships," May 1977.

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classifications, although this process is not well documented and appears, in some cases, to be inconsistent with the 1975/1977 evaluations. The classifications in this updated nomination form are based on a new inventory of the district's resources, additional research, and application of current National Register and National Historic Landmark evaluation standards.

The fifty-seven properties listed below are classified as contributing in the Skidmore/Old Town Historic District. In two instances, properties were reclassified (from their *most recent* previous classifications—which were not always consistent with 1975/1977 evaluations) as contributing, due to appropriate improvements, restoration, or rehabilitation, since 1977. In four instances, properties were reclassified as contributing to reflect new research on the properties and to bring the classifications up to current standards for documentation and evaluation. These six properties clearly contribute to the sense of place, architectural character, and significance of the Skidmore/Old Town Historic District.

The resources are grouped into three sections: Northwest; West (Burnside Street); and Southwest, and are listed by street (numbered streets preceding named streets) in ascending order of street number. Preferred historic names are shown first in **bold** type, followed by common and other names in parentheses. In cases where historic names cannot be determined with certainty, the current common name is first shown in **bold italics**. Map M1 accompanying this document identifies properties by inventory numbers, which are listed at the end of the property descriptions below (for example, # 42). A table of all district resources organized by inventory number is also appended to facilitate locating individual structures. The 1975 nomination identified a group of “primary landmarks” that were especially important in the district. These properties are highlighted and are generally described in greater detail.

Northwest

- ***NW First Avenue***

Skidmore Block (White Stag Block) (# 72): 10-32 NW First Avenue (Current street address is 5 NW Front Ave., shared with the Bickel Block (#91) and the White Stag Building (#92), due to a 2008 lot consolidation. The three buildings are now collectively referred to by the common name White Stag Block) (1889). Italianate, Sullivanesque. Architect unknown.

The Skidmore Block was constructed as a warehouse for Charles Sitton, business partner to Stephen Skidmore, who had bequeathed the land on which the structure sits to Sitton. It represents a transitional style between the district's typical Victorian cast-iron architecture and the new styles of the 1890s. This four-story commercial building is brick with stucco covering the upper three floors. At the street level, there is a colonnade of rusticated stone columns and cast-iron intermediate columns at the street level. The use of cast iron on the lower floor was typical of many buildings of the 1880s. Four bays on the front façade are embellished with tall pilasters with Art Nouveau detailing on the capitals. Details could be described as Sullivanesque, although the vertical composition is broken by strong horizontal spandrels. The tall, narrow individual windows are rectangular at the second story, and arched on the upper stories. Major alterations on the south façade occurred in 1926, when the rounded stone arch over the corner on Burnside Street was removed as part of street widening for construction of the Burnside Bridge. The interior was remodeled extensively in the 1970s and 1980s. Beginning in 2006, the Skidmore Block and two immediately adjacent buildings, the White Stag Building and the Bickel Block, were extensively renovated and remodeled for new uses as the University of Oregon's Portland center and as office space. On the Skidmore Block, the roof and parapet caps were replaced and a sheet metal cornice was added, similar to one that was previously removed. Skylights were added. On the

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south and west facades, windows were replaced with aluminum-clad wood ones. This building was listed as a “primary landmark” in the 1975 National Register nomination.

Norton House (# 55): 29-87 NW First Avenue (1875). Italianate. Architect unknown.

This two-story brick building with stucco facing was designed as a hotel. It was also used as a warehouse, restaurant, rooming house, and retail space. In 1877, *The West Shore* magazine described the Norton House as “possessing all the modern improvements and located near the railroad and steam boat landings, with street cars passing the house every five minutes...”²⁷ Design elements include Italianate segmental lintels and keystones above the windows. The third floor on this building was destroyed by fire. Alterations also have included storefront modifications and extensive changes to the rear façade. The original shed roof at the sidewalk was replaced with a metal shed roof of simpler design.

Blagen Block (# 71): 30 NW First Avenue (1888). High Victorian Italianate. Warren H. Williams, architect. Neils J. Blagen, contractor.

This building was constructed for office, manufacturing and warehouse use, and housed for many years the W. C. Noon Bag Co., one of the largest makers of bags, tents, awnings, and sails on the West Coast. The one-hundred foot front of the Blagen Block is one of the last remaining examples of the rhythmic rows of columns and arches that once united many block fronts in early Portland, and it is the largest cast-iron commercial building still standing on the West Coast, according to William Hawkins.²⁸ This four-story building (with full basement) exemplifies the Italianate style. The upper three stories are of brick surfaced with stucco with cast-iron and wood ornament bolted to the walls. The principal cast-iron elements in the Blagen Block are the ground floor colonnade and pilasters at the center and sides of the building. The grouping of arches across the façade, two per structural bay, is an unusual feature. There are acanthus leaf decorations, along with stars, stripes, arrows, laurel leaves, and lion heads above the capitals. Female heads of cast iron embellish the fourth floor and pediments below the bracketed roof cornice. The façade generally features long rows of individual window openings, with different styles of arches on each floor, topped by a bracketed cornice, parapet and two projecting pediments identifying the two halves of the building. Under the pediments are the building’s name and date. Alterations include removal of the original storefronts on First Avenue, characterized by tall paired doors between the columns. Following a fire in 1980, the missing cast-iron pilasters on Couch Street were replaced with fiberglass pilasters, and the storefront was restored to its original appearance. Individually listed as a local Historic Landmark in 1970, this building was listed as a “primary landmark” in the 1975 National Register nomination.

Fleischner Building (Norcrest China Co.) (# 54): 115 NW First Avenue (1906). Twentieth-century Romanesque. Edgar Lazarus, architect.

This five-story, red brick structure was designed for retail use. Defining features include inset brickwork around the windows on the fifth floor, where two arched windows are set within a larger arched area. Windows and doorways on the ground floor have segmental brick arches. The roofline projects upward to a central pediment shape and is accentuated by a cast-iron cornice with brackets. Alterations include renovations and signage in the mid-1980s.

- *NW Second Avenue*

Burnside Hotel (Shoreline Hotel) (# 43): 2-12 NW Second Avenue (ca. 1901, 1926). Twentieth-century

²⁷ Inscription on historic plaque at Norton House.

²⁸ Hawkins, *Grand Era of Cast-Iron Architecture*, 152.

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commercial.

The history of this three-story utilitarian brick commercial building is somewhat obscure. The three-story Burnside Hotel was built on the site circa 1901. At the time of the widening of West Burnside in 1925-26, portions of the structure were demolished and the hotel was rebuilt. Permit records indicate that much of the original structure was reused, however a new front was created and the southwest corner of the building was clipped, probably to accommodate a streetcar turn at the intersection of Burnside and Second. The building housed the Burnside Hotel (also variously known as the Burnside Lodging House and Burnside Rooming House) until 1928 when it became the S. P. Hotel under Japanese-American ownership. The plain façade of the red brick is adorned by two belt courses, one above the storefront level and one above the third story. There is a row of decorative brick detail at the cornice. The single windows are slightly recessed, six-over-one wood sash. The storefront level has large windows with transoms, awnings, and a corner entrance. Later changes made to this building include storefront remodels and installation of a fire escape. The classification of this building has been changed from noncontributing to contributing. Its character-defining features are still intact, and changes at the storefront level are considered to be reversible. The building contributes to the sense of place and architectural character of the district.

Erickson's Saloon (Pomona Hotel) (# 31). 5-23 NW Second Avenue (1912). Twentieth-century classical. Aaron H. Gould, architect.

This building, designed as a saloon and hotel, is a through-block building with one portion fronting Second Ave (5 NW Second) and one fronting Third Ave (4-10 NW Third). It is a three-story red brick structure with a metal cornice, consoles, and a balustrade with a grille. Decorations include brickwork at the window sills, a cast-stone belt cornice above the storefronts, and cast-iron columns at the first floor. The interior of this building boasted a 684-foot bar. Card rooms and "cribs" (bedrooms approximately 8' x 10') were on the upper floor. The building was partially rehabilitated in the mid-1980s.

Phillips Hotel (Captain Couch Square, Couch Block Building) (# 41): 14-32 NW Second Avenue (1904, 1913). Commercial. Architect unknown.

This two-story brick building has single and paired segmental-arched windows on the upper floor. Ornamental brick work decorates the cornice. Alterations include modifications to the storefronts.

Skidmore Development Co. (# 42): 32 WI/ NW Second Avenue (1913). Commercial. Architect unknown.

This two-story brick building has tripartite windows on the second floor. Ornamental brickwork decorates the cornice. Alterations include utilitarian changes to the storefront, which do not compromise the historic appearance of the building. The classification of this building has been changed from noncontributing to contributing. Its character-defining features are still intact, and changes at the storefront level are considered to be reversible. The building contributes to the sense of place and architectural character of the district.

Couch Street Building (Jazz de Opus Building) (# 30): 27-33 NW Second Avenue (1912). Commercial.

This is a two-story brick building with rectangular windows on the upper floor. Decorative elements include a dentillated cornice, and a belt course divides the two floors. Alterations include removal of the original storefront windows and doors in 1972. New doors and windows have been installed in a style that is not compatible with the building.

Merchant Hotel (# 12, 28): 121-139 NW Second Avenue, 222 NW Davis Street (1880, 1884). High Victorian Italianate. Warren H. Williams, architect (attributed).

The Merchant Hotel (sometimes referred to as the Merchant's Hotel) is the largest High Victorian Italianate

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example remaining in the district. It was constructed for hotel, retail, and office use. It also served as the hub of Portland's Japanese community following World War I.²⁹ The building is of brick construction with a stucco finish and cast iron and wood trim. It was constructed in two parts: the Third Avenue section is four stories and was completed in 1880 and the three-story Second Avenue (at NW Davis) section was completed in 1884. Although it is not known with certainty whether Williams was the architect, the cast-iron pilaster columns feature a design that was used extensively by Williams. Over sixteen feet tall and eighteen inches wide, the columns are embellished by female heads bolted on at the level of the storefront door. Storefront windows are supported by smaller intermediate iron columns, and major upper-floor doorways are emphasized by iron-arched openings. Other decorations include label moldings, keystones, and a cornice above the storefronts. The Willamette Iron Works produced the iron, and its mark appears on several of the pilaster columns and arches. Alterations include removal of the opening facing NW Third and other street-level alterations. The original sheet metal cornice was removed at an unknown date, possibly in the early 1960s when the building was first renovated (fire marshals required the removal of numerous cornices on older buildings throughout the downtown in the 1960s and 1970s). The Second and Third Avenue façades were renovated in the early 2000s, and a seismic upgrade was completed in 2004. Because this building was constructed in two parts it has two addresses and two identification numbers. However, it is considered one resource. This building was listed as a "primary landmark" in the 1975 National Register nomination and individually listed as a local historic landmark in 1970.

- ***NW Third Avenue***

Fritz Hotel (Erickson Hotel; Fritz Hotel Annex) (# 18): 4-10 NW Third Avenue (1913). Twentieth-century classical. Aaron H. Gould, architect.

This is a through-block building, with one portion fronting Second Ave. This three-story masonry building was designed as an annex to Erickson's Saloon at 5 NW Second. This building was renovated in 1981. The ground floor was adapted for office use. The ground floor of the west façade was remodeled in 1991 with compatible new storefronts.

Meriweather Hotel (Mission Hotel and Chapel) (# 8): 11-17 NW Third Avenue (1927). Twentieth-century commercial. Drake, Wyman & Voss, architects.

This three-story building is faced with red brick and decorated with patterned brickwork at the cornice level. Below the roofline there is a neon sign reading "Union Gospel Mission." Symmetrical rows of windows at the second and third stories have an arched center window, flanked by rectangular openings. At the storefront level, one arched doorway and two rectangular doorways have simple brick surrounds. No significant alterations were identified, although changes have been made to the lower-level fenestration. This building is located in both Skidmore/Old Town and New Chinatown/Japantown Historic Districts and is also classified as contributing in the New Chinatown/Japantown Historic District.

Glade Hotel (# 17): 14-18 NW Third Avenue (1900). Twentieth-century Romanesque. Architect unknown. This narrow, three-story red brick building is embellished with ornamental brickwork, including an intricate corbelled cornice, quoins, and parapet. Windows at the third story are rectangular, while at the second story paired arched windows are set within a central arch. Alterations include removal of the first floor cornice and other changes at the storefront level.

²⁹ City of Portland, *Historic Resource Inventory*, 1984; City of Portland, Landmark designation file for Merchants Hotel, 120-136 NW Third Avenue.

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Mae Nam Thai Restaurant (# 7): 21-35 NW Third Avenue (1918). Stripped classical. Charles Ertz, architect. No historic name is apparent for this building. However, prior to the 1942 Japanese-American relocation, the building was known at times as the Maehara Hotel and the Matsuma cleaners.³⁰ This one-story brick building is divided into four bays, with ribbon windows and a flush façade. Decorative brickwork in a Modern design accentuates the flat roofline. This property is located in both Skidmore/Old Town and New Chinatown/Japantown Historic Districts.

S. Ban Company Building (Old Town Café; Aldo Rossi Building) (# 14): 26-32 NW Third Avenue (ca. 1894). Richardsonian Romanesque. Architect unknown.

This is a three-story, red brick building with arches and inset windows on the upper two floors. There is brick ornamentation at the roofline. It housed the offices and general store of Shinsaburo Ban, a prominent member of Portland's Japanese-American community and successful businessman and labor-contractor. The upper stories housed a hotel. Alterations include modifications to the storefront level.

Sinnott House (Florence McDonnell Building, Simon Building). 105 NW Third Avenue (1883). High Victorian Italianate. Architect unknown.

The Sinnott House is a three-story brick building with cast-iron elements. It was a common building type and style in its era. Pilasters with cast-iron capitals are of particular interest. Other details include molded wooden and cast-iron ornament. The façade generally features rows of individual window openings, with different styles of arches on each floor, topped by a parapet, bracketed cornice, and two overhanging pediments. It is possible that the cast iron was supplied by the City Foundry, since it is similar to what they produced for other buildings. Significant alterations include masonry infill on the Couch Street storefronts and replacement of the original metal cornice with a wood cornice. Portions of storefronts on Third Street have been glazed. Individually listed as a local historic landmark in 1970, this building was listed as a "primary landmark" in the 1975 National Register nomination. Note: this building is sometimes referred to as the "Simon Building" since it was owned and perhaps built by Portland Mayor and U.S. Senator Joseph Simon, but is not to be confused with the adjacent Simon Building façade (#5), listed next (# 6).

Simon Building Façade (# 5): 105 WI/NW Third Avenue (1892). Richardsonian Romanesque. Pickles & Sutton, architect.

The building was destroyed by fire and the façade is the only remaining part of the building that once occupied this property. Preservation of the façade earned an AIA award. This property is located in both Skidmore/Old Town and New Chinatown/Japantown Historic Districts.

Portland Mariners' Home (New Wah Mei) (# 3): 203-209 NW Third Avenue (1882). Italianate. Justus Krumbein, architect.

This building was constructed by the Portland Seamen's Friend Society to serve as a "Mariners' Home," a lodging house for itinerant sailors. It housed the Portland Hospital for a time circa 1890 and later served as a lodging house/hotel on its upper floors with various retail uses in the storefronts below. Several Japanese-Americans operated businesses in the building from around the turn of the century until 1941. It is a four-story brick building with a stucco finish. The storefronts feature cast-iron bulkheads and columns. Cast-iron corner pilasters rise to the second floor, continuing in stucco on the upper floors. Simple Italianate ornamentation defines the arched upper-story windows. Projecting brick stringcourses articulate each story. Alteration records are incomplete. In 1952, the cornice and balconies on the Davis St. and Third Ave. façades were

³⁰ Notation on a hand-drawn map featured in Arthur Kazuo, *Issei: A History of Japanese Immigration in the Northwest*, 1973 (reproduced in *Burnside: A Community*, by Kathleen Ryan, 25).

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removed. In 1963, the brick parapet was repaired. In 2003, storefront changes improved the appearance of the façade on NW Third and re-used existing cast-iron columns in the façade. This property is located in both the Skidmore/Old Town and New Chinatown/Japantown Historic Districts.

Portland Seamen's Bethel (Hip Sing Association) (# 2). 211-215 NW Third Avenue (ca. 1889 – 1900). Italianate. Justus Krumbein (attributed).

The early history of the building is somewhat obscure. Previous to construction of the existing two-story structure, a narrow, single-story wooden building occupied the northern half of the site, housing the Seamen's Friend Society's "Seamen's Bethel," a kind of religious and social service center for sailors, that included a chapel, free reading room and kitchen. That building was the former Gem Saloon moved by the Society from the northwest corner of First and Stark in 1879. It had been constructed as early as 1857, the date the Gem Saloon began operations and the *Oregonian* referred to it as the "old time Gem Saloon transformed by the Portland Seamen's Friend Society," soon after its relocation. By 1892, the Bethel operation was located in an apparently new wooden building just to the west, on the site now occupied by Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Society building (#1). Spaces in the former Gem Saloon/first Bethel structure (still owned by the Society) were being rented for use as a store, a druggist and a barber, the building having been altered by single-story addition that filled the gap between it and the Mariners' Home (#3) on the Third Street façade, and the demolition of the rear third of the structure. By 1902, a two-story building with the same envelope as the existing structure occupied the site. It is unclear if the previous wooden building had been further altered with the addition of a second floor or if an entirely new building was constructed. It shares the same stylistic features as the adjacent Mariners' Home. Ground-floor cast-iron pilasters continue above the first belt course in a simulated stone pattern to the cornice and terminate at the parapet above. The second floor façade is stucco over brick. Arched windows at the second floor have label moldings. Alterations include storefront remodels in the 1940s and in 1985. In 1947 an iron balcony was constructed. This property is located in both Skidmore/Old Town and New Chinatown/Japantown Historic Districts.³¹

Foster Hotel (Lyndon Musolf Manor, Foster Apartments) (# 11). 216 NW Third Avenue (1911). Commercial. Architect unknown.

The Foster Hotel is a three-story building with beige-colored brick on the upper floors and wood-framed storefronts on the lower level. The upper floors have paired double-hung windows with exposed concrete sills. Ornamentation includes overlapping bands of raised brick detailing at the corners and pediment, and the cornice has a decorative exposed concrete band. Built as a residential hotel, the building originally contained 180 rooms with no private bathrooms. The building housed the offices of the Marine Workers Industrial Union in the 1930s. It also housed Japanese workers and a Judo parlor. Alterations since approximately 1930 are related to the addition of fire escapes, increased accessibility, fire damage, and changes of use. The structure was rehabilitated in 1974. There was some incompatible remodeling at the storefront level. Alterations in 2006 introduced historically compatible improvements at the storefront level, including a new storefront system with aluminum doors and transom windows. Recessed entryways and storefront alcoves were added along the west, south, and east facades. More retail space was incorporated along NW 2nd Ave. At the second and third floors, windows were replaced. A penthouse, new canopies, lighting and signage were also incorporated.

³¹ Portland Seamen's Friend Society Records, 1877-1915, Mss 292, Oregon Historical Society; Seamen's Abuses: Pamphlets, Scrap-Books and Letters [Portland Seamen's Friend Society correspondence], Multnomah County Library, Wilson Rare Book Room, Multnomah, Oregon; "Portland Seamen's Bethel," *Daily Oregonian*, September 13, 1880; Sanborn Maps, 1879, 1889, 1892, 1901, 1908/24. The University of Oregon Library possesses the Portland Seamen's Friend Society's account book for the years 1877 to 1899 (MS No. B93).

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- *NW Couch Street*

Rich Hotel (Rich Block) (# 29): 205 NW Couch Street (1914). Commercial. Architect unknown.

This two-story brick building was constructed on a quarter block as a residential hotel. Brickwork details include a decorated cornice and square arches above the second-story windows. There are numerous storefronts with transom windows. Alterations include storefront modifications.

- *NW Davis Street*

Globe Hotel (Import Plaza) (# 70): 88 NW Davis Street (1911). Commercial. E. B. McNaughton, architect (attributed).

This four-story brick building occupies a quarter of a block and is organized into five bays, with piers defining openings at the lower level. The upper three floors are divided by belt courses and have rectangular, tripartite windows. Other brickwork details include a corbelled cornice. In 1962, the Globe Hotel was converted to Import Plaza. Before its renovation, the Globe sheltered 400 men in cubicles divided by thin wooden walls.³² In 1963, the storefront level was altered.

Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association Building (# 1): 315-317 NW Davis Street (1911). Twentieth-century commercial. D. L. Williams, architect.

This four-story yellow brick building was constructed as a community center and school by the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association. The main entrance is through wrought-iron gates. The third and fourth floors have balconies with wrought iron balustrades and trim. A metal parapet with a quarter-round element in the center rises above a plain cornice. This property is located in both Skidmore/Old Town and New Chinatown/Japantown Historic Districts.

Merchant Hotel (# 12, 28): 222 NW Davis Street (1880, 1884). High Victorian Italianate. Warren H. Williams, architect (attributed).

This building was constructed in two parts and has two addresses and two property identification numbers, however, it is considered one resource. The other address is 121-139 NW Second Avenue. See description under NW Second Avenue for more information. This building was listed as a “primary landmark” in the 1975 National Register nomination.

- *NW Naito Parkway (Front Avenue)*

Bickel Block (White Stag Block) (# 91): 25-33 NW Naito Parkway. (Current street address is 5 NW Front Ave., shared with the Skidmore Block (#72) and the White Stag Building (#92), due to a 2008 lot consolidation. The three buildings are now collectively referred to by the common name White Stag Block) (1883). High Victorian Italianate. Justus Krumbein, architect.

This four-story brick building was built by successful pioneer confectioner and developer Frederick Bickel and was used for many years as a factory and warehouse by the Parke and Lacey Machinery Company. The upper three floors are covered with stucco, and the lower level is substantially altered. The historic part of the building is highly decorated with Venetian-Gothic motifs, including arches and moldings, trefoil and quatrefoil ornamentation, and other leafy decorative elements around narrow arched windows. Pilasters rise two stories to a bracketed minor cornice below the third floor. Decorations above the upper windows continue the Gothic

³² Ryan, *Burnside: A Community*, 31.

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motif. The iron work was made by Architectural Iron Works of San Francisco, the western branch of Daniel Badger's early architectural iron foundry in New York. Several pilasters are exposed at the structural wall divisions and at the corner. Alterations, neglect and fire damaged many of this building's character defining features in the mid-twentieth century. In 1951, the cornice was removed and the parapet walls were lowered to two feet above the roof. In 1958, "wonderstone" was installed at the storefront level and cast-iron columns were concealed behind the wonderstone. In 1972, a fire damaged original wooden storefront elements and interior woodwork and ceiling joists. Beginning in 2006, the Bickel Block and two immediately adjacent buildings, the Skidmore Building and the White Stag Building, were extensively renovated and remodeled for new uses as the University of Oregon's Portland center and as office space. The roof and parapet caps were replaced and skylights added. At the east façade, the non-historic brick façade was removed to reveal the cast iron work on the ground floor. A new cornice was added at the termination of the cast iron work, replicating one that previously existed. Existing entry doors were used as models to recreate a series of doors that once fronted on this façade. At the north façade, a new entry alcove was placed in the existing opening. Windows were inserted into the four "blind" window articulations, and three new openings were created at the upper levels, continuing the first floor window pattern. This building was listed as a "primary landmark" in the 1975 National Register nomination.

White Stag Building (# 92): (Willamette Tent and Awning Building, Hirsch-Weiss Building, White Stag Block). 5 NW Naito Parkway; 67 W. Burnside Street. (The current street address is 5 NW Front Ave., shared with the Skidmore Block (#72) and the Bickel Block (#91), due to a 2008 lot consolidation. The three buildings are now collectively referred to by the common name White Stag Block) (1907). Utilitarian. Architect unknown.

This is a five story, timber-framed concrete commercial building. The building was designed for manufacturing and warehouse use for the Willamette Tent and Awning Company. The Burnside Street and Naito Parkway façades are faced with red brick. The Naito Parkway façade has diamond-shaped medallions where the concrete structure shows through. The Burnside façade has a similar design motif with tile medallions. In 1926, the south façade was remodeled to attach the building to the new Burnside Bridge, and at that time the original storefronts and fenestration were altered. The fifth floor was added in the 1930s. The ground floor of the east façade was remodeled in the 1950s with aluminum storefronts and stuccoed walls. The building was renovated in 1972. The second floor was adapted for office use, while the first and upper floors were retained for warehousing. Beginning in 2006, the White Stag Building and two immediately adjacent buildings, the Skidmore Building and the Bickel Block, were extensively renovated and remodeled for new uses as the University of Oregon's Portland center and as office space. On the White Stag Building, the roof and parapet caps were replaced and skylights added. At the east façade, ground-floor stucco was removed and replaced with a brick and metal-clad wood storefront. The south façade was renovated, both above and under the Burnside Bridge. New egress doors were installed with wrought-iron rolling gates. Some windows were replaced. In areas where large windows had previously replaced historic multi-paned windows, those changes were reversed. The (non-historic) central ground floor bay opening was altered to match the proportion of the others. This building was individually listed as a local Historic Landmark.

West

- ***W Burnside Street***

Bates Building (# 56): 101-117 W Burnside Street (1885). Nineteenth-century commercial style. Early records indicate this building was used as a hotel. It is a three-story, utilitarian style, brick commercial

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building. The tripartite windows have one-over-one sash with masonry sills and lintels. There is a bracketed cornice with decorative consoles at the corners. The storefront level has large windows and an arched central entrance. There have been some changes to this building since the 1920s. A 1925 record states the building was altered, and it is likely that several changes were made to accommodate the 1925 construction of the Burnside Bridge and street widening. Other unspecified alterations were made in 1981. In 2003, some windows were replaced. Other alterations over the years include storefront remodels and installation of a fire escape. The classification of this building has been changed from non-contributing to contributing. Its character-defining features are still intact, and changes at the storefront level are considered to be reversible. The building clearly contributes to the sense of place and architectural character of the Skidmore/Old Town Historic District.

Salvation Army Buildings (# 44): 134 W Burnside (1904), and 30-40 SW Second Avenue. Twentieth-century classical style.

This property is divided in two parts, with two distinct buildings on one tax lot: 20-30 SW Second Ave to the south (see description below under SW Second Ave.) and 134 W Burnside to the north.

The building at 134 W Burnside is a four-story, irregular-shaped building surfaced with brick. The upper three floors have single, rectangular sash windows. There is a wide sheet metal cornice with block modillions and a dentil frieze. Alterations include changes at the storefront level. Sanborn maps dated 1908 and 1925 indicate that this building originally had a rectangular plan. It was modified prior to 1925 by clipping the northwest corner. This was possibly to accommodate the radius of a streetcar turn at the intersection of Burnside and SW Second. The classification of these two buildings was changed from non-contributing to contributing. Changes at the storefront level of both buildings, while significant, are reversible. The upper two stories retain their character-defining features. These buildings clearly contribute to the sense of place and architectural character of the district. They also stand as an important visual gateway to the heart of the Skidmore/Old Town Historic District.

Wax Building (United Clothing Company) (# 19): 219-223 W. Burnside Street (1926). Commercial. Harold D. Marsh, architect.

This two-story building was designed for retail use at the lower level, with offices above. Tom Burns ran his famous clock-repair shop and radical book store on the ground floor and a lending library in the basement. At the storefront level, the piers are cast stone, with large plate glass windows between the piers. The second story is brick surfaced with stucco. The pier capitals and the frieze above the storefronts are decorated in low relief.

Southwest

- **SW First Avenue**

Skidmore Fountain (# 75): SW First & Ankeny Street (1888). Classical. Sculptor, Olin J. Warner; J. M. Wells, architect.

The fountain is set within an irregularly shaped plaza cobbled in Belgian block. It consists of an ornate bronze basin eight feet in diameter held aloft by an ionic shaft and two bronze caryatids with classical form and drapery. An octagonal granite pool twenty feet in diameter collects water from above, and lion heads below spout small streams of water into four drinking troughs originally designed for use by horses. Stephen Skidmore, a druggist who arrived in Portland by covered wagon, left \$5,000 in his will for a fountain for men, horses and dogs. His friends raised additional funds to commission a design by Olin Warner. It is inscribed "Good Citizens Are the Riches of a City," a quote from C. E. S. Wood. This fountain is Portland's oldest piece of public art and a gathering spot for visitors. Restoration activities completed in 2005 included refurbishing

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the bronze and granite surfaces and mortar joints, repairing damaged parts of the lion heads, and replacing a water jet. Individually listed as a local Historic Landmark, 1975, the fountain was listed as a “primary landmark” in the 1975 National Register nomination.

Reed Building (# 74): (Skidmore Fountain Building; Packer-Scott Building). 16-28 SW First Avenue (1890). Richardsonian Romanesque. Whidden & Lewis, architects.

Constructed by Simeon Reed as a wholesale warehouse, this four-story building has a rusticated stone base and pilasters on the first floor, with smooth brick pilasters and walls above extending to a copper sheet metal cornice. Pairs of semi-circular arches and paired rectangular windows are set within the pilasters. Ornamental details include lower and upper level stone belt courses, and dentils above the fourth floor windows. There is a marquee at the first floor level. Alterations include addition of a new marquee in 1946, which was replaced in 1986, and aggressive sand-blasting of exterior brick surfaces. A new floor was also added in 1996. A large mural featuring “Packy,” a Portland Zoo elephant, was approved in the early 1990s. In 2007, an extensive renovation and new addition were approved for the building’s transition to new use as the world headquarters for Mercy Corps. Public gallery space and retail and office use will also be incorporated. Proposed changes include removal of a later penthouse addition, along with repairs and renovations on both the exterior and interior. The Packy mural will be removed and new openings cut into the north wall. A four-story interconnected addition will be constructed directly to the east, with storefront bays at the lower level and a new major entry facing Ankeny Plaza. The east elevation of the new addition will face the Willamette River. This project will be completed circa 2008. Individually listed as a local Historic Landmark in 1969, this property has an easement holding with the Historic Preservation League of Oregon. This building was listed as a “primary landmark” in the 1975 National Register nomination.

New Market, South Wing (# 61): (New Market Alley Building; Poppleton Building). 75-83 SW First Avenue (1871). High Victorian Italianate. E. M. Burton, architect (attributed).

This property includes two conjoined structures. A small, two-story brick and cast-iron structure was constructed to cover the alley entrance on the south side of the New Market Theater, with two arches on the street level that allowed access to the alley for incoming and outgoing wagons. This modest building was designed in the Italianate style and was known as the New Market Alley Building. It shares the same cornice as the building to the south, which was constructed in the High Victorian Italianate style. That structure was known as the Poppleton Building after an early tenant, the Poppleton Machine Shop. The New Market, South Wing name was established when the New Market Theater was constructed in 1872. Horizontal iron beams span the openings between the structural bays. The cast-iron corner column (at SW First and Ash) was constructed by connecting two adjoining pilasters. The pilasters rest on cast-iron thresholds pierced below by ventilator openings. There is a single row of tall, arched windows on the second story. These are grouped in threes and have truncated arches crowned by foliated keystones. Ornately detailed iron console brackets support the belt cornice, and a brick dentil pattern marks the bottom of the wooden roof cornice. Other decorative details include scroll work bolted to the iron spandrels above the columns and a brick dentil pattern at the bottom of the wooden roof cornice. The building was rehabilitated at the same time as the New Market Theater in the mid-1980s. Contemporary alterations include a modest third story which is set back from the roofline. Individually listed as a local historic landmark in 1969, this property has an easement holding with the Historic Preservation League of Oregon. This building was listed as a “primary landmark” in the 1975 National Register nomination.

Oregon & Washington Investment and Trust Co. (# 79): 122 SW First Avenue (1876). Victorian Gothic. Architect unknown.

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This three-story brick and stucco building was built as the local office of a Scottish investment and banking firm. In addition to financial services, the structure housed a weather observation station on its third floor, operated by the U.S. Army Signal Service from 1878 to 1885.³³ The structure is characterized by surface ornamentation including incised carvings of foliated patterns and carved masks, reflecting the building's Scottish associations. There is a mix of tall pointed and round-arched windows. The building was extensively altered in approximately 1950, when the sandstone and cast-iron façade was masked with a wire stucco shell. Round and pointed arch features of the parapet were also removed. In 1991, a rehabilitation project reversed many changes. The project included structural and seismic upgrading, a façade renovation, and the addition of a rooftop penthouse. The storefront and lobby entrance were also reconstructed. Some details, including lost cast and carved details and cast-iron columns, were recreated. The classification of this building was changed from non-contributing to contributing because of extensive rehabilitation. The building now clearly contributes to the sense of place and architectural character of the Skidmore/Old Town Historic District.

208 Building (Portland Machine Company) (# 82): 208-218 SW First Avenue (1895). Commercial. Architect unknown.

This three-story buff colored brick building was constructed for office and retail use. It is distinguished by tripartite windows, a full-length entablature above the storefront level, and a brick dentillated cornice. Alterations were made to the storefronts and interior of this building in the late 1970s and early 1980s. This property has an easement holding with the Historic Preservation League of Oregon.

Seuffert Building (# 83): 220-228 SW First Avenue (1889). High Victorian Italianate. Architect unknown. This two-story brick and cast-iron building was constructed for office and retail use. Cast-iron columns support an upper brick wall with a stucco finish. Decorative elements include finely detailed molding on the window surrounds and a cast-iron cornice and brackets. A centered parapet displays the construction date of the building. On the second floor, the windows narrow and arch. At the storefront level, there are large display windows for the two shops, which were originally divided by cast-iron columns. There is an arched entrance at the center of the building. The storefront level was altered at an unknown date. The building was individually listed as a local historic landmark in 1969. This building was listed as a "primary landmark" in the 1975 National Register nomination.

Apple Music Company Building (# 66): 225 SW First Avenue (1914). Commercial. Architect unknown. This is a one-story masonry building with a stucco surface. The band of storefront windows is organized in a horizontal strip and capped by an awning. The roof is flat, with a modest belt course below the cornice. There is a single entry door with glass blocks at the transom level. Some modifications have been made to the storefront.

Failing Building (Oregon Marine Supply Building) (# 67): 235 SW First Avenue (1886). High Victorian Italianate. Warren H. Williams, architect.

This is one of the few remaining structures by Williams. This three-story masonry and structural iron building was designed for office and warehouse use. The brick walls are finished with stucco in imitation of stone. The regularly spaced individual windows are tall and rectangular. There is a pediment above the second story on the First Avenue façade, and above the third story a bracketed cornice and pedimented parapet adorn the roofline. Decorative details also include cast-plaster garlands above the third story windows. A San Francisco firm, Edward A. Rix & Co., supplied the structural iron girders. A Willamette Iron Works plaque appears on

³³ Gary K. Grice, *History of Weather Observing in Portland, Oregon, 1858-1950* (Mansfield, TX: s.n., 2005), 13-14.

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the large (16' tall and 14'' wide) cast-iron pilasters, which they manufactured. George McMath described the Failing Building as "a happy Victorian melding of French and Italian influences."³⁴ Alterations include changes in 1979 to the ground floor windows. It is individually listed as a local historic landmark and was listed as a "primary landmark" in the 1975 National Register nomination.

George Lawrence Building (# 85): 306-316 SW First Avenue (1903). Second Renaissance Revival. Whidden & Lewis, architects.

This building was constructed by the George Lawrence Company as a saddle and leather goods factory and wholesale facility, its ground floor serving as a sales room and its upper floors as manufacturing and storage space. The company occupied the building until 1985, when it was converted to office uses. It is a symmetrical, four-story brick building with rusticated piers at the ground level. The four floors are organized into distinct horizontal divisions by belt courses. The windows are both paired and single, with large glazed openings on the lower level. The cornice is corbelled and dentillated.

- *SW Second Avenue*

Holm Hotel (# 33): 9-13 SW Second Avenue (ca. 1890). Commercial. Architect unknown.

This property has two distinct but conjoined structures on one taxlot. Both are three-story brick buildings surfaced with stucco, with streetcar-era storefronts at the lower level and two stories above. The southerly building is narrow, with a bracketed sheet metal cornice, segmental-arched windows and a belt cornice. This building has had some alterations, most likely when Burnside Street was widened in 1926. The northerly building has a simple cornice and rectangular windows with transoms. Alterations also include storefront modifications from the mid-1980s.

Salvation Army Buildings (# 44): 30-40 SW Second Avenue and 134 W Burnside (1904). Twentieth-Century Classical.

This property is divided in two parts, with two distinct buildings on one taxlot: 20-30 SW Second Ave to the south and 134 W Burnside to the north (see description above under Burnside St). The Second Ave. façade is divided into four bays, each topped with a semi-circular metal cornice. On the second story, there are segmental arched windows with surrounds of elaborate dentillated arches emphasized by horizontal band courses. On the Ankeny façade, a wood and metal parapet rises above the third floor and is marked by a crest inscribed with an S. Alterations include infill and other changes to the storefront level, including changes made in 1939 by the J. M. Harder Plumbing and Heating Company. The classification of these two buildings has been changed from non-contributing to contributing. Changes at the storefront level, while significant, are considered to be reversible. The upper two stories retain their character-defining features. The buildings clearly contribute to the sense of place and architectural character of the district. They also stand as an important visual gateway to the heart of the Skidmore/Old Town Historic District.

Western Rooms (# 34): 15-27 SW Second Avenue (1906). Second Renaissance Revival. Architect unknown. This four-story brick building was constructed for hotel and retail use. It is distinguished by a dentillated cornice and decorative brickwork on the third-floor façade. Alterations at the storefront level include some infill and other changes to accommodate commercial use.

³⁴ Thomas Vaughan and George McMath, *A Century of Portland Architecture* (Portland: Oregon Historical Society, 1967), 53.

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New Market Theater (# 45): 50 SW Second Avenue (1872). High Victorian Italianate. Piper & Burton, architects.

This three-story brick building, constructed as a theater and market, was designed in the grand Venetian palace style. It has a cast-iron front, with columned archways at paired entrance portals and two tiers of arched windows. The windows are separated by brick and iron pilasters. The roof cornice features a pediment and a wooden balustrade. A public market was originally located on the street level, featuring a 200' arcade that passed through the building from First Street to Second, lined with 28 marble produce stalls. This building retains its original east and west façades, except for six cornice urns which were removed and an 1884 remodeling of the theater's east entrances. In the contemporary era, the lower level was used for parking through the 1970s, and many interior features were removed. The building exterior was rehabilitated in the early 1980s, some missing ornament was replaced and internal connections were made with the adjacent New Market Annex and New Market, South Wing. In 1984, salvaged columns from the New Market North Wing (demolished in 1956) were reinstalled in their original positions, extending from New Market Theater at the street edge along SW First (some portions are reproductions molded from original pieces). It was individually listed as a local Historic Landmark in 1969. Recorded in Historic American Building Survey, record HABS OR-51. This building was listed as a "primary landmark" in the 1975 National Register nomination.

New Market Annex (New Market West) (# 46): 58-66 SW Second Avenue (1889). Richardsonian Romanesque. McCaw & Martin, architects.

This five-story building was constructed as a warehouse, forge, and annex to the New Market Theater. It has a rusticated stone base, brick and stone exterior walls, and large arched windows in the brickwork. Window bays are set between structural columns. The stone base incorporates columns topped with loosely worked stone patterns. The building is surmounted by a rough-cut stone belt course and a brick fretwork parapet. Art Nouveau-style decorations and an elaborate wrought-iron fire escape and tie bars, along with an engraved corner sign and flagpole support, embellish the building. The building was renovated in the early 1980s for retail and office use. At that time, windows were added to the blind arcade on the south elevation. Originally owned by former Territorial Governor and Portland Mayor David P. Thompson, it is a fine example of Richardsonian Romanesque architecture. Individually listed as a local Historic Landmark in 1969, this building was listed as a "primary landmark" in the 1975 National Register nomination.

Glisan Building (Chown Electric Co.) (# 48): 112-118 SW Second Avenue (1889). Queen Anne Italianate. Architect unknown.

This two-story brick and cast-iron structure housed a variety of uses, including offices, stores and lodgings. It was the third building on this block to be constructed by Dr. Rodney Glisan, a recognized leader in the field of medicine and prominent Portland business leader (the first was the 1872 Glisan Block, demolished, and the second was the 1879 Phoenix Building, #47). Sanborn Maps show the Townsend Creamery located there in 1901, with a store and "junk" indicated by 1908. It was the last Portland building to incorporate cast-iron pilasters and columns, and it represents a transitional building between the earlier Italianate and the later Richardsonian style. The building has small, arched individual windows on the second floor, divided by brick piers suggesting columns. Large display windows are divided by smaller structural cast-iron columns at the entrances to the two shops. The building has elaborate central pediments at both floors. The second floor arches, the decorative motif of the capitals, the parapet railing and other applied ornament display the curvilinear forms of the emerging Art Nouveau style. The building was rehabilitated in the mid-1980s and seismically upgraded in the 1990s. Individually listed as a local Historic Landmark in 1969. This building was listed as a "primary landmark" in the 1975 National Register nomination.

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Haseltine Building (# 36). 133 SW Second Avenue (1893). Richardsonian Romanesque.

This large, four-story building was constructed as a mercantile building by James E. Haseltine for his firm J. E. Haseltine Co., wholesaler of various goods including hardware, hardwoods and wagon-making materials. The first and second stories are rusticated stone, with stucco-covered brick on the upper two floors. The building is organized into five bays, with groups of three rectangular windows in each bay. Massive round stone arches define the ground floor openings. Decorative details include rusticated stone used in the lintels, window sills, and belt course below the roofline. The parapet was repaired in 1951. In 1980, the building was renovated for commercial use. This building was designated as a local landmark in 1969 and was listed as a “primary landmark” in the 1975 National Register nomination.

- *SW Third Avenue (no contributing resources)*
- *SW Ankeny Street*

Young’s Marble Works (Salvation Army Building) (# 52): 131 SW Ankeny Street (1880). Brick Utilitarian. Architect unknown.

This two-story brick building originally housed a marble works and has been used as a factory, warehouse, retail establishment, and mission. On the lower level, there are segmental-arched openings with transoms. The upper floor has single, segmentally arched windows, and above that is a pedimented parapet. Alterations to the building include coverage of the primary façade with a stucco finish at an unknown date. Changes were also made to accommodate retail and office uses.

- *SW Ash Street*

Smith Block (#95): 10 SW Ash Street (1872). Italianate. W. W. Piper, architect.

This is one part of the Smith Block, which also includes 111-113 SW Naito Parkway and 112-118 SW First Avenue (# 96, 78) described below. This address is the northernmost corner of the block, fronting on SW Ash and Naito Pkwy. The Smith Block is comprised of two buildings, originally contiguous and two stories tall, occupying a one-half block and fronting on First Avenue, Ash Street, and Naito Parkway. They were constructed as rental mercantile buildings and were divided into 25’ bays with a light court at center. Both structures have cast-iron elements on the lower level, including columns and arches between rusticated pilasters. The arches feature keystones and spandrel decorations topped by a bracketed wood cornice. This type of arcade was common in Portland in the 1870s and 1880s. The buildings retain their original second-story sash, which are tall and narrow with round arches. The four-bay Naito Parkway façade has an arched parapet inscribed with the name and date of construction. Originally the ground floor windows on this façade were folding doors that could be opened to accommodate shoppers. Alterations to the original two-story building included the insertion of two additional floors within the building envelope. Remodeling efforts dating to the 1940s included removal of some of the wood cornices and alteration of the street-level façades. The northwest corner of the building (at SW First and Ash) was removed in 1955 for a parking lot. In the early 1960s, the northeast corner of the building was restored, and a new entry was added on Ash Street in 1962. Beginning in 1978, additional restoration efforts included altering the façade to match the character of the original building and installing columns and caps cast from cast-iron elements on adjacent unaltered portions of the building. In 2007, additional renovation work began on the other parts of the block, including tenant improvements for new restaurant and retail uses on the ground floor and offices on the upper three floors. The Smith Block was individually listed as a local historic landmark in 1969 and was listed as a “primary landmark” in the 1975 National Register nomination.

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Phoenix Building (Portland Railway Company) (# 47): 124 SW Ash Street (1879). Italianate.

This two-story brick building was constructed by Rodney Glisan, who later constructed the adjacent Glisan Building in 1889 (#48). It appears to have initially housed plumbing businesses and offices, possibly with lodgings above. The Povey Brothers Art Glass Works was located in a portion of the building by 1889. Around the turn of the century it once again housed a plumbing operation as well as the Pacific Coast Rubber Co. with offices and lodgings on the second floor. At one point, it may have contained offices associated with the Portland Railway Co. and the Portland Railway, Light & Power Co. The structure has cast-iron features including columns, piers, and window details. These elements are more evident on the Ash Street façade, with more iron features removed or obscured on the Second Street façade. Single windows on the upper floor are tall and rectangular. Alterations include removal of the cornice and some of the cast-iron elements. The building was also surfaced with stucco, and there have been storefront modifications.

Bickel Building (Wachsmuth Building) (# 23): 223-225 SW Ash Street (1892). Italianate. Architect unknown.

The two-story building was constructed for office use by Frederick Bickel. It is a dark red brick building with wood trim, a flat roof with pediments, and pressed metal trim work at the cornice line, including brackets and finials. The individual windows are tall and segmentally arched. Alterations include repairs from a fire in 1926, including replacement of windows, doors, and floors. Some storefront openings have been partially infilled. The Portland City Council met here for two years until the completion of City Hall in 1894. The Oregon Oyster Company, still located at this building, took up residence in 1915. Individually listed as a local historic landmark in 1969, this building was listed as a "primary landmark" in the 1975 National Register nomination.

- **SW Naito Parkway (Front Avenue)**

Smith Block (# 95), 111-117 SW Naito Parkway and **Railway Building (# 96, 78):** 112-118 SW First Avenue (1872). Italianate. W. W. Piper, architect.

This building is part of the Smith Block, which also includes 10 SW Ash Street as described above. The Smith Block is comprised of two buildings, originally contiguous and two stories tall, occupying a one-half block and fronting on First Avenue, Ash Street, and Naito Parkway. They were constructed as rental mercantile buildings and were divided into 25' bays with a light court at center. Both structures have cast-iron elements on the lower level, including columns and arches between rusticated pilasters. The arches feature keystones and spandrel decorations topped by a bracketed wood cornice. This type of arcade was common in Portland in the 1870s and 1880s. The buildings retain their original second-story sash, which are tall and narrow with round arches. The four-bay Naito Parkway façade has an arched parapet inscribed with the name and date of construction. Originally the ground floor windows on this façade were folding doors that could be opened to accommodate shoppers. Alterations to the original two-story building included the insertion of two additional floors within the building envelope. Remodeling efforts dating to the 1940s included removal of some of the wood cornices and alteration of the street-level façades. The northwest corner of the building (at SW First and Ash) was removed in 1955 for a parking lot. In the early 1960s, the northeast corner of the building was restored, and a new entry was added on Ash Street in 1962. Beginning in 1978, additional restoration efforts included altering the façade to match the character of the original building and installing columns and caps cast from cast-iron elements on adjacent unaltered portions of the building. In 2007, additional renovation work began on the block as part of tenant improvements for new restaurant and retail uses on the ground floor and offices on the upper three floors. The storefront on the southernmost bay 111 was rebuilt to match the original wood

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storefronts on adjacent bays 113 and 117. ADA access accommodations included relocating two iron stoops on northern bays 113 and 117 to the rebuilt bay 111 storefront. Windows on the south façade were replaced with historically compatible wood windows. A penthouse was installed for mechanical equipment, and structural improvements were made. The Smith Block was individually listed as a local historic landmark in 1969 and was listed as a “primary landmark” in the 1975 National Register nomination.

Fechheimer & White Building (# 98): 233 SW Naito Parkway (1870). High Victorian Italianate. Williams & Krumbein, architects.

This two-story masonry structure was constructed for retail and office use. It represents development typical of the 1870s, when a considerable number of fanciful, well designed cast-iron structures were constructed, both large and small. The building sits on a granite base, with cast-iron arches and Corinthian columns on the first floor and elaborate stucco masonry on the second floor. Tall, narrow windows on the second floor are round arched with elaborate crowns. The bracketed cornice is capped by a pedimented parapet. The early architectural unity of Portland’s streets was due in part to the use of similar columns and arches on both full block structures and buildings as narrow as 25’. The Fechheimer & White Building was one such narrow building. The arches on this structure are the same as those on larger buildings. They span six feet five inches and were cast in one piece, which was a technical feat. Another unusual feature is that all the iron work rests on a granite threshold rather than an iron threshold. The iron was provided by Willamette Iron Works, whose plate is still visible on the lower part of the right front pilaster. The original design included three pairs of doors on the first floor, later replaced by a center door and two display windows. In 1962, the building was restored, then refurbished in 1980. In 1990 the door on the Oak Street side was refurbished. Individually listed as a local Historic Landmark in 1970, this building was listed as a “primary landmark” in the 1975 National Register nomination.

Hallock & McMillen Building (# 99): 237 SW Naito Parkway (1857). Italianate. Absalam B. Hallock, architect.

The Hallock & McMillen (or McMillan) Building is the city’s oldest surviving brick commercial structure, and for that reason, is significant both within the district and the city as a whole. It was constructed by Portland’s first architect, who partnered with William McMillen (a.k.a. McMillan), a contractor. The two-story building was constructed in 1857 at the corner of SW Front and Oak streets. Alteration records are incomplete, however, based on an early engraving and photographs, the Naito Parkway façade was substantially altered. In the 1940s, four cast-iron columns were removed on the Naito Parkway façade. The Oak Street façade retains some of its original appearance. This building was listed as a “primary landmark” in the 1975 National Register nomination.

- **SW Oak Street**

Delschneider Building (# 90): 71 SW Oak Street (1859). Italianate. Architect unknown.

This narrow brick building, constructed in 1859, is the second oldest existing building in the district after the Hallock and McMillen Building of 1857. It was first used as a factory by the Novelty Iron and Brass Works. The building was originally two stories tall, with a third story added in 1876. The primary façade has rows of three narrow, rectangular windows on the second and third floors, with larger display windows at the storefront level. The third floor façade is similar to the second, except that bracketed window cornices were tin rather than wood, and the brackets and moldings were slightly different in shape. Today, the Italianate façade is close to its original appearance after completion of the third story. The original façade had tall paired doors instead of shop fronts. Some of these features still remained when the building was remodeled but were removed and

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replaced with glazing at the storefront level. This occurred in the early 1990s. A window was also added in the east wall at ground level. Individually listed as a local historic landmark in 1969, this building was listed as a “primary landmark” in the 1975 National Register nomination.

Freimann Kitchen Building (# 89): 79 SW Oak Street (1884). Commercial. P. H. Schulderman, builder. This one-story brick building features a typical 1880s commercial storefront, with a central entry flanked by two storefront windows and thin, plain columns. Above the storefront windows there is a brick frieze extending to the parapet. Brick piers at both ends of the primary façade have capitals extending above the parapet. The building was constructed with the adjacent Freimann Restaurant Building (#84) as a single, architecturally unified and internally-connected unit. Previous alterations include replacement of the windows and doors in 1974. In 2002, the façade was restored to its original appearance. The classification of this building was changed from non-contributing to contributing because of extensive restoration and rehabilitation. The building now communicates its architectural continuity with the Freimann Restaurant Building and clearly contributes to the sense of place and architectural character of the Skidmore/Old Town Historic District.

- ***SW Pine Street***

106-116 SW Pine Street (# 65): (1915). Commercial, Architect unknown.

This one-story commercial building occupies a quarter block with multiple storefronts around two sides of the building. It is brick with a stucco surface below the roofline. The roof is flat, with a modest belt course below the cornice. The large storefront windows have transoms and are capped by awnings.

United Carriage and Baggage Transfer Co. (Old Spaghetti Factory) (# 49): 133 SW Pine Street (1875). Italianate. Architect unknown.

This three-story brick building was constructed as a livery by the United Carriage and Baggage Transfer Co. which occupied the structure until the mid-1890s, after which it was occupied by Mitchell, Lewis & Staver Co., sellers of vehicles and machinery. Around the turn of the century the American Steel and Wire Co. was located there, as well as the J. McCracken Co., commission agents and suppliers of storage facilities and building materials. From 1908 to 1968 it was occupied by the F. B. Mallory Logging Equipment Co. It has a stucco finish, wood trim, and segmental brick arches over round-arched windows. A bracketed cornice and pediment define the roofline. Two arches at the lower level are large enough to accommodate a high or wide vehicle; one on Second Street and the other on Pine. Alteration records for this building are incomplete. In 1969, the building lost its livery character with an interior alteration. In 1985, the doorway was remodeled. Individually listed as a local historic landmark in 1969, this building was listed as a “primary landmark” in the 1975 National Register nomination.

Porter Hotel (# 27): 221-227 SW Pine Street (1898). Second Renaissance Revival. Architect unknown.

This three-story brick building was constructed as a hotel, with four bays on Pine Street and two bays on Third Avenue. There is brick detailing at the corners of the building in imitation of quoins. Other brick details include a cornice with dentils and spandrels below the second-story windows.

LIST OF NONCONTRIBUTING RESOURCES

The 44 properties listed below are classified as noncontributing. In three instances, properties have been reclassified (from their *most recent* previous classifications) to noncontributing because their construction date is outside the period of significance established for the district under this nomination. See the introduction to

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the preceding "List of Contributing Resources" for more information on the determinations of contributing status in this updated nomination.

The resources are grouped into three sections: Northwest; West (Burnside Street); and Southwest, and are listed by street (numbered streets preceding named streets) in ascending order of street number. A map accompanying this document identifies the properties by their inventory numbers, which are listed at the end of the property descriptions (for example, # 40). A table of all district resources organized by inventory number is also appended to facilitate locating individual structures.

Northwest

- ***NW First Avenue***

115 N/ NW First Avenue (# 53): Noncontributing, vacant.

- ***NW Second Avenue***

110N/ NW Second Avenue (# 39): Noncontributing, vacant.

Oregon Leather Company (# 40): 110 NW Second Avenue (ca. 1900). Architect unknown.

This two-story commercial building occupies a quarter block. It was used in the early 1900s by the Mt. Hood Factory for producing shirts and overalls, and also as a laundry. It later housed a Greek grocery. The building was adapted over time for other uses, and incompatible changes were made over the years, including filling the original freight entrance with concrete block, replacing windows, and surfacing the exterior to conceal architectural features. Noncontributing due to alterations.

134 NW Second Avenue (# 38): Noncontributing, vacant.

220 NW Second Avenue (# 37): Noncontributing due to date of construction (1984).

- ***NW Third Avenue***

1-3 NW Third Avenue and 7-9 NW Third Avenue (# 10, 9): Noncontributing due to date of construction. A new five-story mixed-use Union Gospel Mission building occupies this site, formerly occupied by a structure which received a demolition permit in 2003. The old Union Gospel Mission represents the only contributing structure demolished since the district's listing in 1975 (2008).

20 NW Third Avenue (# 16): Noncontributing due to date of construction (1938).

22 NW Third Avenue (# 15): Noncontributing due to date of construction (1938).

119-139 NW Third Avenue (# 4): Noncontributing due to alterations (1920).

- ***NW Couch Street***

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Estate Hotel (#13): 225 NW Couch Street, (1914) Commercial. Architect unknown.

This brick building was constructed as a hotel and housed retail operations on its ground floor, including a Greek grocery in the early twentieth century. It is six (originally four) stories tall, with a flat roof and is organized into six bays on both street-facing façades. Alterations include storefront remodels, the earliest of which were not compatible with the character of the building. In 1988, the storefronts and cornice were restored, along with other improvements. In 2006 a major rehabilitation added two stories to the building, an alteration that is considered incompatible with the building's historic character. Other renovations included rehabilitation of the brick façade, a full seismic upgrade, and a new storefront system.

- ***NW Davis Street***

33 NW Davis (# 68): Noncontributing due to date of construction (1989).

60 NW Davis (# 69): Noncontributing due to date of construction (1967).

West

- ***W Burnside Street***

First & W Burnside (# 57): Noncontributing due to date of construction.

108 W Burnside (# 59): Noncontributing, vacant.

108 W Burnside (# 58): Noncontributing due to alterations (1890).

118-124 W Burnside (# 51): Noncontributing, vacant.

201-217 W Burnside (# 32): Noncontributing due to alterations (1926).

222-224 W Burnside (# 20): Noncontributing due to alterations (1926).

- ***NW Naito Parkway (Front Avenue)***

Tom McCall Waterfront Park (# 101): (mid-1970s).

This 4.5 acre urban park is adjacent to the Willamette River. It is a linear strip of open space that runs from the northern to the southern boundary of the district along its easterly edge. This waterfront area was once lined with dozens of buildings, which were demolished beginning in 1939 for civic improvements. Waterfront Park was created following the decision in 1974 to remove Harbor Drive. The park now includes a bicycle and pedestrian path, trees, grassy areas, and two memorial parks. The Japanese-American Historical Plaza was dedicated in 1990. It is defined by trees and a curving wall of large inscribed memorial stones along the Willamette River esplanade. Another war memorial is located further south along the waterfront, at the southern edge of the district. It is the Battleship Oregon Memorial Marine Park, a small (7,000' square foot) park that was dedicated in 1976 as part of the Bicentennial. The focus of the park is the mast from the battleship, which was given to the City of Portland in 1943. The park is classified as noncontributing due to age.

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The park includes a public building, the **Ankeny Pump Station**, immediately south of the Burnside Bridge at the edge of the Willamette River. This facility was constructed in 1929 as part of the seawall and sewer interceptor construction project. The seawall and sewer project marks the end of the historic period of significance of Skidmore/Old Town and represents the beginning of a new and difficult era for district. Therefore, because it is not associated with the district's areas of significance, the pump station is classified as noncontributing.

In 2007, several alterations and public improvements were projected for construction in three phases in the Waterfront Park area, as follows; during the first phase added an event platform and shelter; a circular plaza with a water feature; a seawall overlook; and improvements to Ankeny Pump Station, including ornamental fencing. In the second phase, constructing a restroom; and in the final phase, extending the dock pier and constructing a floating dock into the Willamette River.

White Stag Sign (# 93): 5 NW Naito Parkway (1940). Neon and Bulb Lighting. Ramsey Sign Company. This sign is neon and bulb lighting in an angle-iron frame. The sign was originally constructed by the Ramsey Sign Company as an advertisement for White Satin Sugar, and it was altered in 1950 to include animation. In 1959, it was converted to its existing form for the White Stag Company and in recent years the wording was changed to "Made in Oregon," retaining the original neon-lit outlines of the state of Oregon. The sign was not identified or evaluated as an individual resource in the 1975 National Register nomination and was assigned a contributing classification at a subsequent date. The classification of this object has been changed from contributing to non-contributing due to the date of construction, which is outside the district's period of significance. However, this resource retains its designation as a local Historic Landmark.

Southwest

- **SW First Avenue**

16 WI/ SW First Avenue (# 88): Noncontributing, vacant.

25 SW First Avenue (# 60): Noncontributing, vacant.

28 WI/ SW First Avenue (# 87): Noncontributing, vacant.

28 SW First Avenue (# 86): Noncontributing due to date of construction (1969).

118 N/ SW First Avenue (# 77): Noncontributing, vacant.

Freimann Restaurant Building (# 84): 240 SW First Avenue (1884, 2006). Commercial. P. H. Schulderman, builder.

Constructed with the adjacent Freimann Kitchen Building (#89) as a single, architecturally unified and internally connected unit, this single-story red brick building originally served as a restaurant. Its two façades are each organized into three bays, divided by brick piers with capitals extending above the parapet. The bays on the primary west façade feature large storefront windows divided by plain slender columns and with transom lights above. On the south façade, the westernmost bay contains a similar storefront arrangement, the middle bay is unbroken brick, and the eastern bay is pierced by a narrow, arched side entrance. A brick frieze below

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the parapet runs the length of both façades and continues on the adjoining Freimann Kitchen Building. The building's primary entrance is located at the corner in a recessed 45 degree cut-away supported by a single column.

Most of the building's historic features were hidden or damaged by a 1951 remodel when both faces were obscured by Roman brick veneer. In 2006, an extensive rehabilitation project supervised by architect William Hawkins removed the Roman brick and restored the building's historic appearance. The project was guided by an 1889 woodcut of the exterior and architectural evidence discovered on the building, although no historical photographs or original building plans were located. In addition, local seismic regulations required new reinforcing that necessitated deconstruction of the original brick walls and columns (although they were reassembled using the original bricks) and the new storefront windows in the westernmost bay of the south façade appear not to have been a feature of the original building. Because of these factors, the structure is classified as noncontributing. However, historic features and materials have been retained or reused where possible, and most recreated elements were based on building-specific architectural and historical research, for example the fiberglass corner column replicated to match the previously obscured but decayed original wooden column. Although it cannot be classified as contributing under National Register standards, the building now better communicates its architectural unity and historical associations with the Freimann Kitchen Building and supports the historical scale, feeling, and architectural character of the district.³⁵

SW First Avenue at W Burnside (#73): Noncontributing, vacant.

- ***SW Second Avenue***

133 N/ SW Second Avenue (# 35): Noncontributing, vacant.

230 SW Second Avenue (# 50): Noncontributing, vacant.

- ***SW Third Avenue***

Paris Theater (# 21): 6 SW Third Avenue (1930). Mediterranean. Francis Jacobberger, architect.

The basic structure of this building is believed to date from 1890. Under various names (Star Theater, Gaiety Theater, Storefront Theater), it hosted vaudeville acts, "exotic dance," and other popular entertainment over most of its life. It was substantially remodeled in 1930, when a 20' section was sheared from the west façade due to widening of SW Third Avenue. Elements of the façade were reused in the 1930 remodeling, including metal sash windows, medallions, and possibly the tile roof.³⁶ In 1976, the structure was classified as noncompatible in the Skidmore/Old Town Historic District. In 1978, that classification was upgraded to compatible by the Historic Landmarks Commission.³⁷ In 1991, façade improvements included restoration of columns to the approximate design of the 1920s plan and a new ticket booth. The present façade is surfaced with stucco. There is a bracketed red tile roof and round-arch openings at the entrance. A projecting sign with "Paris Theater" sits at the roof level above the marquee. It has been reclassified as noncontributing due to the date of alterations that define its contemporary character, which is outside the district's period of significance.

³⁵ Heritage Consulting Group, "Historic Preservation Certification Application, Freimann Building, 240 SW 1st Avenue/79 SW Oak Street, Portland, Oregon," [ca. early 2007]; John W. Russell, "RE: Status of 240 SW First Avenue and 79 SW Oak," memorandum to Nicholas T. Starin, 8/1/2007.

³⁶ William J. Hawkins III, letter to Jerry Brock, Portland Historic Landmarks Commission, August 9, 1991.

³⁷ City of Portland, Historic Landmarks Commission, Minutes, November 8, 1978.

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10-26 SW Third Avenue (# 22): Commercial (1908).

This is a two-story red brick structure with relieving arches over single windows on the second floor. Its uses have included retail, lodging, offices, and theater. The original cornice was removed, and the ground floor was significantly altered on SW Third and Ankeny Street. Noncontributing due to alterations.

108 SW Third Avenue (# 24): Noncontributing, vacant.

122 SW Third Avenue (# 25): Commercial. Architect unknown (1902).

The storefront façade of this building was altered considerably with the addition of larger windows and a new entrance. These areas are outlined by brick in a contrasting color. This building does not convey its original historic storefront character. The addition of newer style features conveys a false historic appearance and confuses the date and style of construction. Noncontributing due to alterations.

128 SW Third Avenue (# 26): Noncontributing due to alterations (1915).

- ***SW Ankeny Street***

SW Ankeny & Front (# 94): Noncontributing, vacant.

- ***SW Naito Parkway (Front Avenue)***

Tom McCall Waterfront Park (# 101): See above description under NW Naito Parkway. Noncontributing due to date of construction (mid-1970s).

Fire Station #1 & Fire Museum (# 76): 65 SW Naito Parkway (1952). Modern. This structure was erroneously classified as contributing at some time subsequent to the 1975 National Register nomination. It has been reclassified as noncontributing due to date of construction and style.

131 SW Naito Parkway (# 80): Noncontributing, vacant.

221 SW Naito Parkway (# 97): Noncontributing, vacant.

- ***SW Pine Street***

50 SW Pine Street (# 81): Noncontributing due to date of construction (1983).

- ***No Street Address***

N/A. Noncontributing, vacant (# 62).

N/A. Noncontributing, vacant (# 63).

N/A. Noncontributing, vacant (# 64).

N/A. Noncontributing, vacant (# 100).

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8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:
 Nationally: X Statewide: Locally:

Applicable National
 Register Criteria:

A X B C X D

Criteria Considerations
 (Exceptions):

A B C D E F G

NHL Criteria:

1, 4

NHL Theme(s):

I. Peopling Places

3. migrations from outside and within

4. community and neighborhood

III. Expressing Cultural Values

5. architecture, landscape architecture, and urban design

6. popular and traditional culture

V. Developing the American Economy

3. transportation and communication

4. workers and work culture

6. exchange and trade

Areas of Significance:

Architecture, Commerce, Entertainment/Recreation, Exploration/Settlement, Maritime History, Social History, Transportation

Period(s) of Significance:

1857-1929

Significant Dates:

N/A

Significant Person(s):

N/A

Cultural Affiliation:

N/A

Architects/Builders:

E. M. Burton, Architect; Charles Ertz, Architect; Aaron H. Gould, Absalom B. Hallock, Architects; Justus Krumbein, Architect; Edgar Lazarus, Architect; Architect; Ion Lewis, Architect; Harold D. Marsh, Architect; McCaw & Martin, Architects; E. B. McNaughton, Architect; Pickles & Sutton, Architects; W. W. Piper, Architect; Piper & Burton, Architects; P. H. Schulderman, Builder; Olin J. Warner, Sculptor; J. M. Wells, Architect; D. L. Williams, Architect; Warren Williams, Architect; William Marcy Whidden, Architect; Whidden & Lewis, Architects.

Historic Contexts:

XVI. Architecture

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G. Renaissance Revival (1830-1920)

3. Cast Iron: Gothic, Romanesque, Renaissance

XII. Business

D. Trade

1. Import-Export

2. Wholesale

E. Finance and Banking

1. Commercial Banks

9. General Finance

L. Shipping and Transportation

XXX. American Ways of Life

D. Urban Life

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State Significance of Property, and Justify Criteria, Criteria Considerations, and Areas and Periods of Significance Noted Above.**INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANCE**

Portland's Skidmore-Old Town marks the site where the city started and then flourished. It contains buildings in a variety of high Victorian styles, many made of cast iron, comprising one of the most impressive commercial blocks (sic) on the west coast.

-“Skidmore/Old Town Historic District,” National Historic Landmark Nomination, 1977

Portland's Skidmore/Old Town Historic District is nationally significant under National Historic Landmark Criterion 1 for its historical associations with the early development and economic growth of the Pacific Northwest's most important urban center of the last half of the nineteenth century. Portland's pioneer merchant-entrepreneurs, speculating and capitalizing on the city's strategic location at the head of ocean-going navigation on the Willamette River and its connection to the greater Columbia River system, transformed it from a stump-strewn clearing to the cultural, financial, trade and transportation hub of the Pacific Northwest—second only to San Francisco as a “metropolis” of the Far West. Its mercantile houses, commission agents, steamship companies and financial institutions, clustered along Front and First streets in and near the present Skidmore/Old Town Historic District, supplied the goods, services and trade connections that not only supported the development of western Oregon, but that of the greater Pacific Slope region. Skidmore/Old Town's historic commercial buildings memorialize Portland's position as a commercial entrepôt that linked a large dependant hinterland to national and global economic systems, and highlight the sometimes under-emphasized role of key urban centers in facilitating the settlement and development of the western United States. The district also served as a major West Coast locus for the provision of important “social services” and related urban functions oriented to the working classes and in some cases ethnic minority groups, including: lodging for itinerant workers, sailors, and loggers; union halls; reading rooms; missions and chapels; ethnic publishing houses; and various popular entertainment and vice venues like saloons, gambling halls, burlesque houses, and brothels. Finally, Skidmore/Old Town's late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century transition from commercial core to Skid Road—an association it has yet to fully shed—exemplifies the changes in urban spatial organization seen in port cities across the nation whereby central business districts and high-status residential areas migrated away from historic waterfront areas which subsequently suffered from neglect, disinvestment, and loss of historic fabric through public “improvement” projects.

The 1857 erection of the brick and cast-iron Hallock and McMillen Building, the earliest surviving structure in the district and the second-oldest building on its original site in the city, marks the beginning of Skidmore/Old Town's period of significance. Over the next three decades, Portland solidified its position as the primary urban center of the Northwest, built on the foundation of its trade-centered economy. As a part of the city's commercial core along and near the Willamette River highway, Skidmore/Old Town was central to this role.

However, beginning slowly in the late nineteenth century and accelerating in the early twentieth century, growth steered away from the Skidmore/Old Town area, and neglect set in for the city's earliest commercial district, with its old-fashioned buildings and its increasingly gritty, flood-prone waterfront location. The status of the area declined and its mix of businesses and building uses changed, as Portland's central business district shifted to the south and west. In the late 1920s, and continuing into the 1970s, a wave of large-scale public works projects and accompanying building demolitions significantly altered the physical and economic fabric

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of the district. The first of these was the completion in 1926 of the new Burnside Bridge and the related widening of West Burnside Street. This resulted in the removal of significant portions of the district's Burnside-facing buildings and turned the street into a major auto arterial that bisected the district and complicated access to its businesses. This intervention was followed in 1929 by the construction of a seawall and sewer interceptor along the Willamette River. Marking the end of the period of significance, this major infrastructure project necessitated the removal of most of Front Street's by-then decaying wharves—structures once central to the city's economic vitality and civic identity—a clear expression of the district's shift away from a maritime orientation. Dozens more cast-iron buildings were removed in the 1940s to allow for the construction of the Harbor Drive freeway.

In the late twentieth century, however, public sentiment began to shift as the economic and cultural significance of the district's historic structures became better understood and valued. Concerted advocacy, policy initiatives and public and private investment arrested the demolition trend and inaugurated a still-continuing era of preservation, renovation and rehabilitation. While many resources have been lost, a significant and cohesive collection of historic structures remain. Together, they remind us not only of a "grand era" of commercial architecture, but of the critical role Portland played as a regional metropolis—a financial, mercantile and transportation hub integral to the settlement and growth of the greater Pacific Slope.

The district is equally significant under National Historic Landmark Criterion 4 for the exceptional architectural values of its mid- and late-nineteenth-century cast-iron commercial buildings—one of the finest collections in the nation and perhaps the most outstanding in the Far West. These two- to four-story, primarily Italianate structures work in concert with sympathetically scaled and designed late nineteenth-century Richardsonian Romanesque and early twentieth-century buildings to define the rich urban character that marks it as a national treasure. With elaborate decorative elements echoing Italian Renaissance designs, Skidmore/Old Town's "Commercial Palaces" notably contribute to Portland's architectural distinctiveness and collectively reflect both the economic success of its early businesses, and the high cultural aspirations of its citizens and leaders.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT AND SIGNIFICANCE

Chinookans, Furs and Forts: the Lower Columbia Region to 1840

For centuries prior to first contact with Europeans and Americans, Chinookan-speaking peoples, including the Clackamas and the Multnomah, and the Kalapuyan-speaking Tualatin, inhabited the lower Columbia basin in the vicinity of the area now known as Portland. Chinookans inhabited both sides of the Columbia with villages, camps, resource areas, and trade routes located along portions of the lower Willamette. A large population resided seasonally on Sauvie Island, at the Willamette's mouth, where Lewis and Clark reported encountering 2,400 individuals living in 1806.³⁸ Chinookan societies relied on the bounty of the region's temperate climate, rich forests and plains, and extensive river systems. Important staples included salmon and wappato, a nutritious root. Cedar trees offered basic material for products such as clothing, water craft, and large plank lodges. Active trade networks were maintained among the inland, valley and coastal cultures of the area.³⁹

European exploration in the Northwest began in the sixteenth-century with the tentative approaches of Spanish and British navigators along the Pacific coast. With the 1792 sighting of the Columbia River by the American Robert Gray, a centuries-long search for a great western waterway that promised significant economic benefits

³⁸ Carl Abbott, *Portland: Gateway to the Northwest* (Northridge, CA: Windsor Publications, 1985), 9.

³⁹ Gordon DeMarco, *A Short History of Portland* (San Francisco: Lexicos, 1990), 8.

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was rewarded. Fourteen years later, William Clark became the first European-American to sight the mouth of the Willamette, almost 100 miles up the Columbia. Clark's exploration of the river took him as far south as the bluff bearing today's University of Portland.⁴⁰

The first forty years of the nineteenth century in the greater Columbia River region were marked by the rise of a prosperous fur trade, Christian missionary activity, the devastation of native societies, and the beginnings of permanent European-American settlement. The Hudson Bay Company's Fort Vancouver, founded at the confluence of the Columbia and the Willamette in the 1820s, was the Columbia region's most important European outpost and trade center, and served as the first "metropolis of Northwest."⁴¹ The fort was the nerve center for the Columbia fur trade and served as a locus for the exchange of goods and information among and between Europeans, Canadians, Americans and American Indians. While the Hudson Bay Company was averse to agricultural and urban settlement of the Oregon Country, which it felt was incompatible with the fur trade, Fort Vancouver and its Chief Factor John McLoughlin would provide critical respite, provisions, and information to the earliest waves of American settlers, who emerged exhausted, bewildered and occasionally starving from their continental treks.

Settling the Valley and the Birth of Portland, 1840 - 1851

Diseases such as small pox and influenza, introduced by early European contact and transmitted along trade routes, killed vast portions of the Northwest's indigenous population by the late 1830s, devastating Chinookan societies. With an estimated 50 to 90 percent reduction of the indigenous population in the Lower Columbia region, White settlers found little of the native resistance encountered by their counterparts in other parts of the continent when major settlement of the Willamette Valley began in the early 1840s.⁴² Encouraged by prospects of "free" land, new markets and the emerging ideology of "Manifest Destiny," pioneers poured into the Oregon Territory, drawn especially to the fertile Willamette Valley. The first land claimed by settlers was generally easily accessible by water, including the Willamette, Tualatin and Yamhill Rivers, in a settlement pattern not uncommon during pre-railroad era western expansion. By 1843, the most significant settlement hugging the lower stretch of the Willamette was Oregon City, 30 miles south of the river's mouth. What would become Portland was merely a glade used by Indians and trappers for respite and trade known as the "The Clearing."⁴³

But the potential of the future townsite, relatively free of all-too-common riverside swamps and with plentiful timber for construction, soon caught the attention of speculators. As early as 1840, Massachusetts sea captain John Couch logged an encouraging assessment of the river's depth adjacent to The Clearing, noting its promise of accommodating large crafts—a pivotal element in the future city's early growth. Three years later, William Overton, an 1841 pioneer from Tennessee, established a 640 acre claim at the site, sharing it with 1842 pioneer Asa Lovejoy in order to cover the 30-cent filing fee. The claim included the southern portion of the present-day Skidmore/Old Town Historic District. The following year, a destitute Overton bartered his half of the claim to Oregon City merchant Francis Pettygrove for \$50 worth of provisions to resettle in California.

In 1844 Maine-born Pettygrove and Lovejoy set up a log-built warehouse/wharf/store at the foot of present-day

⁴⁰ Abbott, *Portland: Gateway*, 8.

⁴¹ Dorothy O. Johanson and Charles M. Gates, *Empire of the Columbia: A History of the Pacific Northwest* (New York: Harper & Row, 1957), 148-154.

⁴² DeMarco, *Short History of Portland*, 17; Johansen and Gates, *Empire of the Columbia*, 148-154, 274.

⁴³ Abbot, *Portland: Gateway*, 15.

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Washington Street, marking the modest beginnings of Portland's rise as a marketing center and port.⁴⁴ In 1845, Lovejoy sold his share of the land claim to Benjamin Stark, a young New Orleans-born merchant who had arrived aboard the *Toulon* in charge of a shipment of Eastern goods bound for Pettygrove's warehouse and store. Stark and Pettygrove were instrumental in establishing the city's first major trading pattern, the "triangle trade" between San Francisco, Honolulu and Portland, involving lumber, wheat, salt fish, sugar, and general merchandise.

In 1845, with Pettygrove's store serving as the commercial hub for the tiny settlement and high hopes for the future, Lovejoy hired 1843 pioneer Thomas Brown to plat a grid of sixteen blocks just south of today's Skidmore/Old Town Historic District. Bordered by narrow streets, blocks measuring 200 feet by 200 feet were divided into eight 50-foot by 100-foot lots, setting the scale for future street frontages throughout the early city.⁴⁵ In 1849-50, new townsite owner Daniel Lownsdale platted over 100 new blocks, extending the city right to the northern edge of the original Overton claim (the south line of today's Ankeny Street). In 1850, John Couch platted a portion of his claim abutting just to the north in the same pattern (although at an off-set, with streets now running true north-south). Thus by this date, all of the land within the present historic district was platted (though not necessarily improved) with a fine-grained grid that was perhaps more suited to a small village than an aspiring metropolis.

Like all nascent pioneer towns urban plans notwithstanding, 1840s Portland was dominated by the surrounding wilderness. An early diarist described the frontier character of the town in early 1848:

*Portland has two white houses and one brick and three wood colored frame houses and a few cabins ... We traveled four or five miles through the thickest woods I ever saw ... [on an] intolerably bad road ... These woods are infested with wild cats, panthers, bears and wolves.*⁴⁶

The visions and efforts of Portland's early proprietors, unlike those of many other hopeful western speculators, soon began to bear fruit. Utilitarian wood-frame stores, warehouses and hotels, often designed in vernacular interpretations of Classical Revival styles, sprang up rapidly in the modest but growing downtown, which extended south from the southern fringes of Couch's Addition along Front and First Streets, through the current historic district. The location and date of the first structure within the historic district proper is not known with certainty, but was possibly John Couch's warehouse and wharf, constructed by 1849 near the foot of what would become Couch and Davis Streets. One of the first documented businesses within the district was that of Andrew Skidmore (father of the fountain's namesake, Stephen Skidmore), who established the California House hotel in the late 1840s atop his house on First Street, between what is now Burnside and Couch streets. Here he housed his family, ran a general store, and sold insurance.⁴⁷ By 1851, as many as thirty businesses were in operation, including Henry Corbett's dry goods store at Front and Oak and William S. Ladd's wholesale liquor business at 46 Front Street. Both men would become leading figures among Portland's economic and political elite.

⁴⁴ Jewel Lansing, *Portland: People, Politics, and Power, 1851-2001* (Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 2003), 1 and 6; MacColl, *Merchants, Money, and Power*, 8; DeMarco, *Short History of Portland*, 33-35.

⁴⁵ Hawkins, *Grand Era of Cast-Iron Architecture*, 24.

⁴⁶ Charles H. Carey, *General History of Oregon* (Portland: Metropolitan Press, 1936; reprint, Portland: Binford & Mort, 1971), 655 (reprint edition). The reference to a brick structure at this early period is intriguing, but not supported by other sources known to the authors.

⁴⁷ Eugene E. Snyder, *Skidmore's Portland: His Fountain and Its Sculptor* (Portland: Binford & Mort, 1973), 16; MacColl, *Merchants, Money, and Power*, 19.

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By 1850, the 800-person community was the largest settlement in the Pacific Northwest, but was still very much a frontier village, derided by outsiders as “Stumptown” and “Mudtown.” It was a place where “stumps from fallen firs lay scattered dangerously about Front and First Streets ... humans and animals, carts and wagons slogged through a sludge of mud and water ... sidewalks often disappeared during spring floods.”⁴⁸ Portland’s future as the region’s leading city was far from assured. Other valley and river towns, such as Milwaukie, Linnton, Milton, and not least, the venerable Oregon City, competed fiercely for population, business, and the vital transportation and trade services and relationships needed to connect the still isolated area to regional, national and international markets.

Front Street: Commerce and the Rise of a Metropolis, 1851 - 1880

*The Far West was more distinctively urban [than the Midwest] in its own way. San Francisco and Portland grew earlier, in comparison with their hinterlands, than Chicago and Detroit; they were the bridgeheads from which the East conquered the wilderness. And they were general headquarters as well, throughout the complex warfare of settlement and development. They collected and paid out the capital that the whole region needed—to water its dry land, to dig its mines, to build its railroads, to collect its ores and crops and ship them back to the East. —Earl Pomeroy, *The Pacific Slope*.*

In the three decades between 1850 and 1880, Portland experienced remarkable population growth and economic expansion. In its first census in 1850, the city’s population was 821 and, like many frontier towns, was predominantly male, with 653 male whites, 164 female whites and four “free colored” individuals. By 1880 the city had grown to 17,577 persons, and, though dwarfed by San Francisco, with a population of 233,959, Portland was the largest city in the Northwest, clearly outdistancing Seattle with its 3,533 persons.⁴⁹ Within ten years following incorporation by territorial charter in 1851, Portland opened its first public school, formed a fire department, installed telegraph lines, and established the third gas works on the Pacific Coast.⁵⁰ In 1872 the city’s first public transit service was established—a horse and mule-drawn railway running along First Street through Skidmore/Old Town. That same year Portland was lauded as one of the richest cities, per capita, in the country. By 1880, the former village had transitioned into a complete, fully urban community—the “Metropolis of the Northwest.”

In this era, Portland’s downtown, centered on Front and First Streets,⁵¹ developed into the region’s most impressively urbanized area, its substantial three and four-story brick and cast-iron buildings lending the city a

⁴⁸ MacColl, *Merchants, Money, and Power*, 18-19.

⁴⁹ See Table 1 Population of Selected Western Cities 1850-1920, for more population figures and data sources.

⁵⁰ City of Portland Auditor’s Office, “Portland Historical Timeline,” <http://www.portlandonline.com/auditor/> (accessed May 19, 2005).

⁵¹ Portland’s first central business district stretched south along Front and First Streets from about North D Street (now NW Davis Street), to about Taylor Street, encompassing today’s Skidmore/Old Town Historic District. The geographic boundaries of the historic district were drawn to encompass an *extant* concentration of downtown Portland’s Italianate, American Romanesque and Commercial Style buildings, dating from the mid-nineteenth through early twentieth centuries. From a strictly historical perspective, however, these boundaries especially along the southern edge of the district, are somewhat artificial as the earliest commercial core was not confined to Skidmore/Old Town, but stretched south to the vicinity of the Yamhill Historic District where another smaller collection of extant early commercial buildings is concentrated. The downtown’s “first” early buildings located south of the present Skidmore/Old Town, including such structures as the Cree Building (1862) and the Ladd and Tilton Bank (1868), have generally not survived, many victims of the Great Fire of 1873 or “uptown” redevelopment pressure in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

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metropolitan ambiance surpassed in the Far West only by San Francisco. But Portland's prominence was not limited to mere appearances for it had emerged as the economic capital of the Northwest, that, in Paul Merriam's words "extended its economic influence in important ways so as to dominate leading sectors of the economy of its hinterland—especially in trade, transportation, finance, and manufacturing."⁵² Front Street's wholesale merchants, such as Allen & Lewis, Corbett, Failing & Company, and McCracken & Company supplied manufactures, dry goods, groceries and commodities to communities throughout the developing West, from the farms of the Willamette Valley and Columbia Basin to the mining towns of Idaho and the lumber camps of Puget Sound. Many wholesale merchants also operated as commission, consignment and export agents, brokering agricultural commodity transactions. This typically involved extending credit to farmers or grain dealers in advance of expected harvests, and then buying and reselling their products on the San Francisco, East Coast or foreign markets. The Oregon Steam Navigation Company, with its massive warehouse and dock facility between Pine and Ash and a huge fleet of river steamers, monopolized the Columbia-Snake river transportation system as far upriver as Walla Walla and Lewiston, controlling a vital trade link between the Oregon Country and the markets of California, the East Coast, the Far East and Europe. Portland's financial institutions, such as the Ladd & Tilton Bank and the Mortgage Bank of Oregon and Washington, provided the capital and exchange services needed for urban and agricultural land development, farming and commercial growth throughout the northern Pacific Slope, from Portland's growing East Side to the Columbia Basin and the Inland Empire.

Foundations of a Trade Economy

Central to Portland's emergence as a major West Coast city was its role as a commercial trade center, serving not only the immediate region, but the greater Willamette Valley and eventually the "Inland Empire" of the Columbia River system, stretching into what would become parts of Washington, Idaho, Montana and British Columbia. A number of factors contributed to the city's early mercantile success and set the stage for its growth trajectory. Critical was Portland's ability to take advantage of its geographic location by developing transportation and business connections to both its hinterland and national and international trade networks. Positioned just below the Ross Island sand bars that obstructed ocean-going vessels from navigating further upriver on the Willamette, Portland was a natural trans-shipment point for the Willamette Valley's agricultural products, sent downriver by barge or stern-wheelers and loaded onto ocean-going sailing and steam vessels from the Front Street wharves. In 1868, Judge Matthew Deady noted that "in 1850, shipping began to arrive freely from California and the Sandwich [Hawaiian] Islands. Couch & Co. dispatched the Brig Emma Preston to China ... [in 1851] regular steam communications with San Francisco was established."⁵³ So too the city was located only a few miles downriver from the first major navigational impediment on the Columbia, "the Cascades," the portage around which would prove to be a critical link in the greater Columbia trade system and which Portland's merchant-elite would fight successfully to monopolize. Another early factor was completion of the Canyon Road in 1853, providing Portland with the best connection of any of the competing upper Willamette towns through the West Hills to the rich farmlands and settlements of the Tualatin Plains and Yamhill Valley.⁵⁴

If Portland was favorably positioned at the deep-water head of an extensive river network with the potential to knit together a vast hinterland, it still needed markets for its commodities, goods and services. The demand for

⁵² Paul Gilman Merriam, *Portland, Oregon, 1840-1890: A Social and Economic History* (PhD diss., University of Oregon, Eugene, 1971), 256.

⁵³ Matthew Deady, "Portland-On-Wallamet," *Overland Monthly* 1 (1868): 34-43.

⁵⁴ Johansen and Gates, *Empire of the Columbia*, 336-350.

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provisions and materiel to fuel the Northwest's sporadic Indian Wars provided an early boost to the fledgling city's traders. Of even greater significance for Portland's economic success was the growth of Western gold and mineral mining. Touched-off by the famous 1848 discoveries near Sutter's Mill in Northern California (which nearly depopulated Portland for a time but also brought enormous profits to the merchants that stayed, as prices in California skyrocketed), the great Northwest mining era stretched into the 1870s and encompassed at least eleven major mining districts and numerous smaller ones throughout Oregon, Washington, Idaho, Nevada, Montana, and British Columbia. Portland was not the only entrepôt serving the vast mining frontier, but it dominated the mining trade north of California in the early phases into the early 1860s. Over time, it was challenged in British Columbia by the rise of Victoria, in the south by Salt Lake City, and from the east by St. Louis and other Midwestern cities (via the Missouri River system and later the ever-westward extension of the railroads). San Francisco, the urban dynamo of the Far West, had a jump on everyone; by the mid 1850s its political sophistication, financial resources, trade connections, and business expertise made it a commercial threat virtually everywhere west of the continental divide. However, throughout the mining era, Portland controlled at least portions of the trade associated with all of the major mining areas north of California, and it firmly retained dominion in the "inner circle" most easily served by the Columbia River, including the Kootenay, Clearwater, Salmon, Powder, and John Day mining districts (see Map MO7).⁵⁵

The mining frontier provided early markets for Oregon's agricultural and lumber products and the imported manufactured goods that were distributed by the wholesale merchant houses beginning to dominate Front Street. In the opposite direction, gold quickly became one of the Portland's most important "exports." Gold dust was shipped downriver from the eastern mines on Oregon Steam Navigation Company boats, usually in the custody of Wells, Fargo & Company agents, whose offices were located on Front Street, north of Stark,⁵⁶ where it was assayed and prepared for re-shipment to San Francisco or New York on coastal steamers or ocean vessels docked at the Front Street wharves. In 1864, \$7.6 million in gold was shipped from Portland to San Francisco; in 1865, Wells, Fargo alone shipped over \$6 million in gold from Portland. Smaller amounts of gold were handled by Portland's homegrown Land & Tilton Bank, located at First and Stark.⁵⁷

This two-way commerce with the mining frontier established trade patterns and relationships that Portland's mercantile and shipping concerns would continue to exploit for many decades, as the markets for manufactured goods and foodstuffs in the boom-and-bust mining areas were augmented by the more reliable needs of the settlements and farming communities of the interior and coastal Northwest. Mining also helped the region's economic system by hastening the adoption of gold as a means of exchange and building the capacity of Portland's financial institutions. In the words of Johansen and Gates, "gold rushes and Indian wars gave the Willamette Valley farmers markets, and the Columbia River and its tributaries were the highways over which their produce moved. Portland was the depot for this traffic and by 1858 had overshadowed all of its rivals [along the Willamette and lower Columbia rivers]."⁵⁸

Wholesale Trade: Supplying the Pacific Northwest

Wholesale trade and distribution was critical to Portland's economic success and rise as a major urban center. Concentrated in the riverfront-oriented urban core encompassing today's Skidmore/Old Town Historic District

⁵⁵ D. W. Meinig, *The Great Columbia Plain: A Historical Geography, 1805-1910* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1968), 214-219 and passim.

⁵⁶ Wells, Fargo later had offices at First and Stark and First and Ankeny.

⁵⁷ Merriam, *Portland, Oregon, 185-191*, 226-228; DeMarco, *Short History of Portland*, 36-39.

⁵⁸ Johansen and Gates, *Empire of the Columbia*, 338.

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and stretching to the south along Front Street, the city's trading companies supplied a wealth of products to cities and towns throughout the growing Pacific Northwest, including all kinds of manufactured and dry goods, hardware and building products, agricultural implements and machinery, food stuffs and liquor. One of the earliest and most long-lived of the Skidmore/Old Town firms engaged in this trade was Allen & Lewis, which specialized in the wholesale grocery business. Founded in 1853 by Cicero Lewis and Lucien Allen, their first building was located at the northeast corner of Front and Burnside Streets. Expanding into grain export in the 1870s, Allen & Lewis became one of the "foremost wholesale houses not only in Portland but of the entire West Coast," with branches in Spokane and Walla Walla, Washington and La Grande, Baker City, Eugene, and Marshfield (Coos Bay), Oregon. In 1882, they constructed a full-block, three-story cast-iron building designed by Warren Williams on Front between Couch and Davis (demolished in 1942). Its 100,000 square feet of space (including docks) housed their business and, initially, other wholesale firms, including paint, glass and door suppliers. For a time the company also operated out of the Bickel Block (#91).⁵⁹

Another example of the district's enterprising wholesale firms is Corbitt & Macleay, located at 13 and 15 Front Street, between Ash and Vine, and later further south at 64 and 66 Front Street. Starting in the wholesale grocery and liquor trade, the firm, led by Scottish transplant Donald Macleay, diversified and expanded, becoming a major commission and shipping merchant and leading exporter of Columbia wheat to Europe. The firm also canned and exported salmon and supplied ship spars, planking and other products to the Hong Kong market.⁶⁰

Liquor was a valuable and in-demand product on the western frontier and Portland quickly became one of the major liquor distribution centers in the Far West. Ladd, Reed & Co. located at 73 Front Street, was a pioneering firm in this lucrative business. The company, dating from the 1850s, provided a source of early wealth that partners William Ladd and Simeon Reed later parlayed into myriad other successful business ventures, including shipping, banking, manufacturing and real estate development, setting them atop Portland's political and economic elite. In 1865, Portland had at least four wholesale liquor suppliers, including Millard & Van Schuyver, which advertised itself as "successors to Ladd, Reed & Co." By 1878, there were at least ten wholesalers specializing in liquor, two of which were listed by R. Dun & Co. as among the city's ten wealthiest companies, including the Portland branch of A. P. Hotaling, a San Francisco-based firm that would later bottle and sell liquor as the first tenant of the 1889 Skidmore Block on First and Burnside (#72). Most of the liquor sold out of Portland was imported, but Addison and Starr Lewis, who would found the First National Bank of Portland, operated a distillery at 70 Front Street, between Pine and Oak. Portland distributors supplied establishments throughout the greater Northwest and did a good business with intermediary suppliers of the saloons and camps in the mining districts of eastern Oregon, Washington, Idaho, and British Columbia. The records of the firm of Humiston, Wilson & Company, located at 87 Front Street, show accounts between 1859 and 1864 in Canyon City, Dalles City, and Umatilla Landing, Oregon and Lewiston, Idaho, as well as Mid- and Upper-Willamette Valley towns such as Eugene City, Albany, Butteville, and Scio. Portland itself formed a large home-grown market, judging by its forty-four retail liquor establishments in 1865, which grew to no fewer than seventy-three by 1873. These included a number of famous (or perhaps notorious) saloons in and near Skidmore/Old Town such as the Oro Fino on Stark between Front and First, with its "choicest qualities of wines, liquors, ales, porter and fine cigars" and oyster bar "where the bivalves will be served in all styles, and at

⁵⁹ MacColl, *Merchants, Money, and Power*, 31-33, 154; Hawkins, *Grand Era*, 122-123; Arthur L. Throckmorton, *Oregon Argonauts: Merchant Adventurers on the Western Frontier* (Portland: Oregon Historical Society, 1961), 127; *Allen and Lewis Preferred Stock*, 1, no. 6, June 1, 1916.

⁶⁰ MacColl, *Merchants, Money, and Power*, 215; City Directories for 1873 and 1890.

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all hours.”⁶¹

Portland’s merchants, some of whom branched into manufacturing, also supplied the farming, mining, milling and lumbering machinery and other equipment needed to develop the Northwest’s expanding agricultural and resource extraction economies. The Parke & Lacey Machinery Company manufactured, imported and exported various engines, boilers, milling and logging equipment and other machinery from its location in the Bickel Block (#91) at Front and Couch. Following the closure of the theater and public market in the New Market Block (#45) in the late 1880s, the building housed the firm of Staver & Walker, “Largest Machinery and Vehicle Repository on the Coast,” which marketed agricultural and milling equipment, engines, wagons and carriages throughout the Northwest, with branches in La Grande, Oregon, Walla Walla, Spokane, and Pullman, Washington, and Moscow, Idaho.⁶² The Portland machine shops and foundries that supplied architectural ironwork for Skidmore/Old Town’s buildings also manufactured agricultural machinery and implements that were exported from the city and constituted an important sector in Portland’s modest but growing manufacturing base.⁶³

While some of Skidmore/Old Town’s early trading companies, such as Allen & Lewis, remained prosperous into the twentieth century, numerous others were more short-lived. One example worthy of note is the mercantile firm owned and operated in the 1850s by Abner Hunt Francis at Front and Stark. Abner, a friend of famed abolitionist Frederick Douglass, arrived in Portland in 1851 with his wife Sydnia and his brother O. B. Francis and were among the early city’s very few African-Americans. Within days of opening their trading business, Abner’s brother was arrested for violating the territorial exclusion law of 1849, which made it illegal for “any negro or mulatto to come in or reside within the limits” of Oregon. In September 1851, Judge O. C. Pratt ordered the Francis family to leave the territory. The expulsion order was not enforced however, after a petition signed by 211 Portland residents protesting their expulsion and urging repeal of the law convinced the legislature not to enforce it. Abner Francis remained in Portland for a decade, operating a profitable trading business and amassing a fortune estimated at \$36,000 when he left for Vancouver Island in 1860. If Francis’ economic success was unusual for an African American in early Portland, it is not surprising that it was earned by running a trade house on bustling Front Street.

Portland competed directly with San Francisco in the wholesale distribution trade. That city had risen meteorically as the undisputed premier city of the West Coast following the gold rush, and its financial, trade, and shipping interests were preeminent throughout much of the Far West. Even with its geographic advantage with respect to much of the Pacific Northwest and the Inland Empire, Portland was at a disadvantage as long as its merchants were dependant on San Francisco as the shipping intermediary for imported goods from the East Coast and Europe. Beginning in the late 1860s, Portland merchants, conscious of “working under the hand of San Francisco,” in the words of *Oregonian* editor Harvey Scott, made concerted efforts to arrange for direct purchase and shipment of goods to Portland. As Portland’s trading firms matured in the 1870s and 1880s, they were increasingly successful in cutting-out San Francisco as an intermediary, lessening port duties, tariffs, mark-ups, and other “friction” costs. Increasingly free from dependency on San Francisco, Portland acquired a larger and more independent regional economic status, which its business and political elite used, in turn, to extend the city’s economic hegemony over its own burgeoning hinterland, which included not only the

⁶¹ MacColl, *Merchants, Money, and Power*, 213; *Portland City Directory*, 1865, 1873; Portland *HRI*; Sanborn Map 1901, *Guide to the Humiston, Wilson, and Company Records*, 1859-1964 (Oregon Historical Society Research Library, finding aid).

⁶² *Portland and Vicinity: Willamette Valley, Columbia River, Puget Sound* (Portland: L. Samuel, 1887).

⁶³ Portland’s early economy was distinctly commercial. Manufacturing, while important locally, was relatively underdeveloped in the nineteenth century and to some extent well into the twentieth century.

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Willamette Valley, but, large parts of western and coastal Oregon and Washington and the great interior region stretching up the Columbia and Snake river drainages.

Export Trade: Regional Development and World Markets

Portland had quickly established itself as the Northwest's primary importing and wholesale supply center, but it also emerged as its most important export hub—the nerve center for financing, marketing and shipping the region's growing agricultural surpluses. By the 1870s, maritime export of agricultural products, especially wheat and flour, was Portland's most important commercial activity, a trade sector important to Portland's economy to this day. Initially, much of the agricultural trade was actually “upriver,” as the produce of the Willamette Valley was shipped to booming interior mining regions. With the transition of the interior Columbia Basin to an agricultural base following the successful adoption of “dry-land” farming techniques, this trade reversed, and, beginning in the mid-1860s, Portland exports of grain and other agricultural products from the Columbia region grew markedly, assisted by improvements to the Columbia River transportation system, such as channel dredging and portage railroads, pushed forward by Portland's business interests. This pattern, in which the produce of a broad interior region was brought to international markets via a river-based transportation network that was focused on a lower-Columbia trade hub, was a clear echo of the earlier trade systems of the North West and Hudson's Bay Companies, which had likewise funneled furs from the vast Pacific Slope to their trading and export centers at Ft. George (Astoria) and Ft. Vancouver on the lower Columbia. With its deep-water port, access to the Pacific Ocean, urban infrastructure, and an established and successful wholesale merchant community, Portland was the logical trade and finance nexus for the massive expansion of the Columbia grain trade and the development of the Inland Empire that began in the 1860s and extended well into the next century (see Maps MO6 and MO8).⁶⁴

Through the 1860s, most of the grain and other agricultural products shipped from Portland were bound for California. In 1867, products valued at about \$2.5 million (excluding shipments of gold valued at about \$4 million) were exported from Portland, including some fifty different types of trade articles, most of which went to San Francisco, bound for California consumers or re-export to foreign ports. The most valuable products (other than gold) were wheat, flour and bran, collectively worth over \$800,000. Other exports included \$130,000 worth of wool, \$90,000 of fresh and dried apples, \$62,000 of bacon and \$35,000 of butter. In a pattern that would continue for many decades, manufactured and highly processed goods made up a small proportion of exported products, but a sizable quantity of barrel headings and staves valued at \$750,000 were also shipped.⁶⁵

By the early 1870s wheat was Portland's largest export product and with the grain trade rapidly rising as the one of the city's primary economic engines, Portland's merchants worked hard to break San Francisco's control of the export market for Oregon wheat by expanding direct connections to growing national and international agricultural markets. In what was probably the first direct shipment of Oregon grain to Europe, 22,166 Centals (100 pound sacks) of wheat, worth \$31,000, left Portland for Liverpool on the *Helen Angier* in 1869. The deal was brokered by John McCracken of J. McCracken & Co., a successful importer, shipping agent and commission merchant with offices on Front Street north of Ankeny (the firm would later have offices in the United Carriage and Baggage Transfer Co. building (#49)). In an 1872 advertisement, the company claimed to represent five Oregon flour mills and specialized in flour, grain, bacon, lard and fruit—“purchases and sales made for the

⁶⁴ Throckmorton, *Oregon Argonauts*, 304-309; Earl Pomeroy, *The Pacific Slope* (New York: Knopf, 1965), 6, 50, 120-139; Merriam, *Portland, Oregon*, 256-299; MacColl, *Merchants, Money, and Power*, 144; Meinig, *Great Columbia Plain*, passim.

⁶⁵ Deady, “Portland-on-Wallamett,” 34-43; Scott, *History*, 217-245.

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Boston and New York markets.”⁶⁶

Direct foreign grain exports grew in size and value through the 1870s and into the 1880s. In 1871, wheat and flour valued at \$475,000 accounted for more than 86 percent of the city’s foreign exports (see Table 4). In 1879, \$3.1 million worth of wheat and flour left the city, carried away by more than 90 visiting grain vessels. By 1882, the value of foreign wheat and flour exports had risen to nearly \$6.5 million and accounted for almost 99 percent of Portland’s foreign exports and more than half of all foreign and domestic exports combined.⁶⁷

The largest single export market for Portland’s wheat was Great Britain. In 1871, more than 80 percent of foreign wheat exports were shipped to Great Britain, primarily to the English port of Liverpool. Portland’s trade relationship with Britain was cemented through strong personal and financial ties between business interests that illustrate the extraordinary entrepreneurial and investment efforts of British—and especially Scottish—capitalists and traders in the development of the American West in the last half of the nineteenth century. Arriving in 1866, Donald Macleay was among the earliest and most successful of the Scottish businessmen to come to Portland. Leading the aforementioned wholesale firm of Corbitt & Macleay, he became one of Portland’s largest wheat exporters in the 1870s, using his English and Scottish connections to steer grain towards British ports. In Scotland for business in 1874, Macleay wrote to Portland banker and trade magnate John Ainsworth recommending a fellow Scot, William Reid, who was soon coming to Portland representing “an extensive company of capitalists in Scotland who are looking to our new country for an outlet of capital which we so much need.” Reid would become one of the city’s most influential businessmen and a key channel for Scottish investment in the Northwest. Another important individual in Portland’s relationship with Britain was Scotsman James Laidlaw, who came to Portland in 1872 and established the grain trading and shipping firm of James Laidlaw & Co., with offices at 16 North Front. Laidlaw’s trade successes and business connections in Britain resulted in his appointment as Vice-Consul for Great Britain in 1874. Managing both his private interests in grain trading and his public duties representing the commercial interests of Britain, Laidlaw flourished in Portland for several decades. He finally closed his trading firm in 1896, when he became Consul for Great Britain in the district comprised of Oregon, Washington, Idaho, Montana, and Alaska, which had its headquarters in Portland.⁶⁸

In 1878, Balfour, Guthrie & Co., a division of the huge British commodity trading firm Balfour, Williamson & Co., established a Portland branch under the local direction of Scotsman Walter J. Burns. Balfour, Guthrie was soon one of the largest grain traders in Portland, surpassing locally-based trading firms like Corbitt & Macleay and Allen & Lewis in wealth and longevity. The firm’s representatives purchased wheat from Northwest farms and exported it from Portland via their subsidiary shipping line. Expanding into crop financing, farm mortgaging, fire insurance and flour milling, Balfour, Guthrie invested heavily in Portland and the Pacific Northwest, constructing more than seventy warehouses on Portland’s waterfront, and building one of the largest flouring mills in the Northwest on the waterfront north of Skidmore/Old Town (Crown Mills). By 1890, more than ten major Scottish business institutions were thriving in Oregon. Scotsmen such as Macleay, Reid, Burns, and Laidlaw had joined the ranks of Portland’s economic and political leadership, alongside Yankees like William Ladd and Henry Corbett and German Jews like Bernard Goldsmith and Philip Wasserman, both

⁶⁶ Throckmorton, *Oregon Argonauts*, 304-309; *Samuel’s City Directory*, 1873, 378.

⁶⁷ Scott, *History*, chap. 5 and 7; MacColl, *Merchants, Money, and Power*, 144, 154-155; Merriam, *Portland*, 282-290.

⁶⁸ MacColl, *Merchants, Money, and Power*, 214; Joseph Gaston, *Portland, Oregon: Its History and Builders in Connection with the Antecedent Explorations, Discoveries and Movements of the Pioneers that Selected the Site for the Great City of the Pacific*, 3 vols. (Portland: The S. J. Clarke Publishing Co., 1911), 21-22.

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successful merchants who served terms as Portland mayors.⁶⁹

While grain dominated the export trade, other commodities were shipped out of Portland as well, including wool, lumber, fruit and salmon. By 1867, wool was second only to grain and flour in export value in Oregon, much of it sent down the Columbia from The Dalles, “fast becoming the largest primary wool market in the world,” and shipped from Portland to East Coast ports, especially New England, a major textile milling region. Lumber exports were also significant, although the natural advantages of massive timber stands adjacent to extensive ocean waterways would allow Puget Sound ports to eventually surpass Portland and Oregon in the lumber trade. Most of Portland’s lumber was intended for domestic markets, especially California, although some was sent to Asia, Australia and Hawai’i. George Weidler’s Willamette Steam Mills Lumbering and Manufacturing Company in Couch’s Addition produced lumber for local and export markets, including Australia and Hong Kong, much of it brokered by John Ainsworth, one of the principals in the Oregon Steam Navigation Company and co-founder in 1885 of Ainsworth National Bank, located at Third and Pine.⁷⁰

Diversification: Transportation, Investment, and Financial Services

Beginning in the 1860s, the most successful of Portland’s merchant-entrepreneurs were able to capitalize—literally and figuratively—on their early trading profits by diversifying into more complex business activities. First-generation merchants like William S. Ladd (who later took pains to hide his beginnings in the wholesale liquor trade), Henry Corbett (who made his early profits selling agricultural machinery), Henry Failing (hardware and miscellaneous goods), and Simeon Reed (a partner in Ladd’s wholesale businesses) parlayed their early trade earnings into a tightly held and closely knit, if occasionally acrimonious and competing group of banks, transportation companies, investment syndicates, and mining, manufacturing and real estate ventures that collectively broadened and deepened Portland’s regional economic preeminence. One of the best examples is the rise of the Oregon Steam Navigation Company (OSNC), which illustrates Earl Pomeroy’s adage that “few local enterprises were as large and as powerful as those that carried their goods.”⁷¹ Although organized as a corporation, the OSNC was tightly controlled by Portlanders William Ladd, Simeon Reed, steamship owner Capt. John Ainsworth, and Robert Thompson of The Dalles.

Operating from offices on Stark Street and a massive wharf and warehouse (demolished) between Ash and Pine in Skidmore/Old Town, the OSNC was able to gain control of shipping on the Columbia within a few years of its founding in 1860 by successfully monopolizing key portages at the Cascades and The Dalles, sustained reinvestment of company profits into better equipment and infrastructure, and at times ruthless protection of its interests. At the time of its sale to rail magnate Henry Villard in 1880, its assets included four railways, extensive real estate holdings in Portland, Astoria, The Dalles, Umatilla, and Wallula, and 26 steam ships with a capacity of over 15,000 tons. The OSNC not only controlled shipping on the Columbia, from gold dust to flour, but also its passenger traffic. Because essentially all boats stopped in Portland, it also supported the local economy, moving “tens of thousands of people, who spent money at Portland’s hotels, restaurants and entertainment venues.” It became the city’s most influential company and perhaps the best local example of a large, “Gilded Age” monopolistic corporation. Reorganized as the Oregon Railway and Navigation Company and tied to the Northern Pacific rail empire after 1880, it extended Portland’s “national influence while

⁶⁹ MacColl, *Merchants, Money, and Power*, 214; W. Turrentine Jackson, *The Enterprising Scot: Investors in the American West after 1873* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1968); City of Portland, Bureau of Planning, *Centennial Mill Historic Preservation Assessment*, 2006, 7.

⁷⁰ MacColl, *Merchants, Money, and Power*, 150; Throckmorton, *Oregon Argonauts*, 300-301.

⁷¹ Pomeroy, *Pacific Slope*, 96.

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solidifying its position at the center of the region's banking, trading and transportation network."⁷²

Portland's early merchants were also instrumental in establishing and expanding the region's banking and finance systems, mirroring the ante-bellum American pattern in which large merchant houses came to control enormous amounts of the nation's available capital and increasingly handled many financial and credit transactions. Portland's first bank—the first in the Far West north of San Francisco—was founded in 1859 by William S. Ladd and his former trading partner C. E. Tilton, resident of San Francisco. The Ladd & Tilton Bank, housed at first in a second-story addition to Ladd's Front Street trade house, was immediately successful, helping Ladd become immensely wealthy. More importantly, the bank fulfilled the need for a full-service bank in the city and provided a supply of local capital for real estate development and non-mercantile businesses, such as sawmills, flouring mills and various manufacturing operations throughout the region. Quickly becoming a preeminent Pacific Northwest institution, a dedicated facility was completed at the northwest corner of Stark and First in 1868. Perhaps the most impressive building in the city at the time, the elaborate cast-iron fronted bank stood until 1954, when it was demolished. Fortunately, Eric Ladd (no relation to William Ladd), an early Portland preservationist, salvaged the iron façades which were incorporated in the 1967 expansion of the nearly identical 1869 Ladd & Bush Bank building in Salem, Oregon.⁷³

In 1873, Portland had three banks; by 1892 it had 20 and was clearly the financial services capital of the Northwest. Portland's early financial district radiated from its core between Stark and Washington from Front to Third, and overlapped with the southern portion of today's Skidmore/Old Town district. It included a number of financial institutions directly tied to the city's merchant elite such as the First National Bank of Portland, located on First Street near Alder, organized by Addison and Lewis Starr in 1866 and purchased by traders-cum-financiers Henry Corbett and Henry Failing in 1869. Other local financial institutions included the United States National Bank of Oregon at Second and Pine and the Ainsworth National Bank at Third and Oak, founded by pioneer ship captain John Ainsworth.⁷⁴

While local banks like Ladd & Tilton and the First National Bank were clearly important in the development of Portland's financial capacity, their capitalization was relatively small in the scheme of things, and shortage of local capital was a chronic problem in the Pacific Northwest, threatening to slow development. This state of affairs created significant opportunities for East Coast and foreign investors, eager to cash in on the economic potential of the American West. In 1865, the London-based Bank of British Columbia opened a Portland branch, establishing an early British financial connection to the city. The bank's flat-iron-shaped building, bounded by Vine, Ankeny and Front Streets was completed in 1868 and expanded in 1882. With its narrow west façade and entrance facing the Skidmore Fountain, the building was a distinctive Portland landmark until its demolition in 1928, part of a cluster of buildings and short, narrow streets whose "subtle relationships made the grouping of buildings on this street one of the most handsome in the city."⁷⁵

Recognizing the need for capital as a force to maintain high interest rates, a group of Dundee, Scotland, capitalists established the Oregon and Washington Trust and Investment Company in 1873. A Portland office was established as the company's American headquarters, with a local board that included prominent

⁷² Dorothy O. Johansen, "The Oregon Steam Navigation Company," *Pacific Historical Review* (June 1941): 179-188; MacColl, *Merchants, Money, and Power*, 124-139; William Toll, "Commerce, Climate & Community: a History of Portland and Its People," <http://www.ohs.org/education/oregonhistory/> (accessed May 5, 2006).

⁷³ MacColl, *Merchants, Money, and Power*, 104-106; Hawkins, *Grand Era*, 44-47.

⁷⁴ Burrell, *Gold in the Woodpile*, 149 and passim.

⁷⁵ Hawkins, *Grand Era*, 42.

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Portlanders such as former Governor Addison Gibbs, Chief Justice E. D. Shattuck and merchant John McCracken. The company sent William Reid to Portland to act as agent and general manager in 1874. In 1876, he oversaw the construction of a distinctive three-story cast-iron building on First Street between Pine and Oak to house both the Oregon and Washington Trust and Investment Company and another Reid endeavor, the Oregon and Washington Mortgage Bank (#79).

Destined to become one of Portland's most prominent bankers and business leaders, Reid secured loans and mortgages throughout the Pacific Northwest attracting over \$6 million in Scottish capital over a ten year period financing a broad array of agricultural, commercial and residential real estate ventures. Reid would also help form the influential Portland Board of Trade (housed in the New Market Theater Building (#45), and later in the 1907 Board of Trade building at Fourth and Oak). He was also heavily involved financially and politically in the tangled development history of the Northwest's railroads, including promotion of a number of important short lines such as the Oregonian Line (later the Portland and Willamette Valley Railroad) along the west side of the Willamette River. Reid was also responsible for construction of Reid's Block (1883) at the northwest corner of Pine and First Streets, one of the district's now lost cast-iron buildings. However, graced with Scottish thistles and busts of the Earl of Airlie, the Oregon and Washington Trust and Investment Company Building has survived. Restored in 1996, it stands as a reminder of Portland's role as a major financial services center for the Northwest and the importance of international capital in the development of the West.⁷⁶

Urban Environment and Buildings, 1851–1880

Front Street's mercantile buildings, warehouses and wharves were perhaps the defining features of the district's urban character, their solidity animated by the coming and going of river and coastal steamers and ocean-sailing vessels, and the bustle of drays, wagons and carts moving goods to and fro. However, as a part of Portland's first compact downtown, Skidmore/Old Town contained a wide diversity of land uses and activities. Manufacturing, office, retail, institutional and residential uses were all to be found in close quarters to each other, reflecting the somewhat haphazard "mixed-use" spatial pattern common to downtowns of rapidly growing cities across the West in this era.

In 1857 the Hallock and McMillen Building—believed to be the city's oldest extant brick and cast-iron edifice—was constructed by Absalom Hallock at the northwest corner of Front and Oak. Hallock, often credited as the city's first architect, was an active Portland citizen, serving as City Surveyor, Chief Engineer of the Fire Department, and City Councilman. He is believed to have practiced for a time in the building, later working from offices at 51 Front Street advertising himself as "Architect, Civil Engineer, and City Surveyor." He partnered at various times with architect Lou Day and with William McMillen, the building's other namesake, described as a contractor by architectural historian Richard Ritz, who served as Multnomah County Sheriff in 1855. Hallock was also an early officer for the Willamette Iron Works located on the waterfront below NW Davis which producing much of the architectural iron used on Portland's buildings.⁷⁷

⁷⁶ Jackson, *Enterprising Scot*, 24-28, 62, 249-250; E. Kimbark MacColl, *Merchants, Money, and Power*, 214-215; Merriam, *Portland, Oregon*, 310-313.

⁷⁷ While inconsistent, sources indicate that William McMillen probably spelled his name with an "e." Although there is a small chance that the William McMillan mentioned by Richard Ritz as a partner of Hallock is a different individual, it seems unlikely. A William McMillen is listed as rooming at 51 Front Street, the location of Hallock's architecture and engineering practice, in the McCormick city directories of 1864 and 1865. The University of Oregon's online "Guide to Architectural Materials in Special Collections" states that the firm of Hallock & Day changed its name to Hallock & McMillen in 1855. Harvey Scott refers to the "Hallock & McMillen" building in his 1890 *History of Portland*. See also Hawkins, *Grand Era*, 15-16; George Belknap, *American Bibliographical Notes: And More Addenda to Belknap's Oregon Imprints* (Worcester, MA: American Antiquarian Society, 1976),

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Another extant building from this early period is the nearby Delschneider Building (#90), erected in 1859 on Oak Street by Joseph Delschneider (or Dielschneider) to house his Novelty Iron and Brass Works.⁷⁸ William Hawkins states that the building housed the Oregon Iron Works in 1863, owned by Oregon Governor A. C. Gibbs.

One of the most significant surviving structures of this period is the three-story New Market Theatre building (#45), constructed in 1872 by prosperous businessman and steamboat operator Captain Alexander Ankeny on the large, irregularly shaped block bounded by Ankeny and Ash streets and First and Second Avenues. This brick, cast-iron fronted structure was one of the most expensive in the city costing Ankeny more than \$100,000. Following the “national fashion of incorporating culture and commerce in the same building,” it housed the city’s public market, commercial offices and a lavish 800 seat theater (1,200 at standing-room capacity).⁷⁹ The first floor market hall contained twenty-eight marble-countered stalls, displaying a variety of produce, meats, fish, baked goods, dairy products and other provisions. Anders and Rowe occupied three stalls, selling fine groceries including “imported delicacies” and “cordials, liquors, and fine teas and coffee.” One stall was occupied by Frank Fabre’s coffee and oyster bar. On portions of the second floor were the offices of the influential Board of Trade and the private apartment of Captain Ankeny (and his manservant Sam and dog Prince). The gymnasium of the Turn Verein Society, a prominent German-American athletic and social club, was located on the third floor. The building’s wings housed Pfunder’s Drugstore and the offices of several prominent businesses, including Wells Fargo and Co. (express and banking services), James Laidlaw & Co. (grain trading), Western Union Telegraph, the *Oregon Bulletin* newspaper, and a few insurance and real estate agents. The theater itself occupied most of the second and third floors. It finally opened in 1875 with a “beautifully mounted” production of *Rip Van Winkle* and immediately became Portland’s preeminent cultural facility and a symbol of its respectability and maturity as a city. It hosted all kinds of events from the best visiting theatrical productions to important social celebrations, charitable benefits and political rallies. Portland’s most important visitors were fêted here, including former President Ulysses S. Grant in 1879, who was likely struck by the evident growth of the city which he had often visited when he was a young U.S. Army Brevet Captain stationed at nearby Columbia (later Vancouver) Barracks in 1852-1854.⁸⁰ In 1884, champion prize fighter John L. Sullivan demonstrated his pugilistic prowess for local sporting enthusiasts there. That same year, the city’s Jewish community held a celebration honoring English Jewish philanthropist Sir Moses Montfiore. The house, “packed from pit to dome” with Jews and non-Jews alike, heard orations from the city’s leading dignitaries, including Jewish lawyer and merchant David Solis-Cohen and Unitarian minister Thomas Lamb Eliot.⁸¹ The event “truly marked the success and acceptance of Oregon’s Jewish community,” from which many of the city’s successful merchants and political leaders were drawn.⁸²

The New Market Theater was also the site for less savory popular and political events. In January 1886, the local contingent of the Knights of Labor packed the theater in a mass rally aimed against Chinese workers. Following completion of the Northern Pacific Railroad in 1883 which had left many Chinese laborers out of work, and anti-Chinese agitation in other parts of the Northwest, Portland’s Chinese population had swelled to

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⁷⁸ McCormick’s 1865 City Directory lists an F. Delschneider as “machinist, Oak St.”⁷⁹ MacColl, *Merchants, Money, and Power*, 187.⁸⁰ See Hawkins, *Portland’s Historic New Market Theater*, passim.⁸¹ Matthew Deady, *Pharisee Among Philistines*, 455.⁸² Steven Lowenstein, *The Jews of Oregon: 1850-1950* (Portland: Jewish Historical Society of Oregon, 1987), 68-69.

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around 4,000.⁸³ Speaking at the meeting was Seattle anti-Chinese agitator Daniel Cronin, who three months previously had led the violent effort to expulse 200-300 Chinese from Tacoma, most of whom ironically had now relocated to Portland. Although Cronin's declaration that day that within three months there would "not be a working Chinaman in Portland" was overblown, a number of anti-Chinese outbursts occurred in Portland over the next few months culminating in March with several violent attacks on Chinese that required deployment of the state militia.

The heyday of the New Market Theater was remarkably short-lived. It closed in 1887 after a mere 12 years, a victim of "competition from the more spacious and convenient 'up town' facilities."⁸⁴ As early as a few weeks after its opening in 1875, Judge Matthew Deady had noted in his diary that it was "a beautiful little theater, but too far downtown," indicative that even at this early date Portland's leaders were beginning to view the Skidmore area and the northern end of the commercial core in a less favorable light.⁸⁵ If this locale was perhaps no longer the right fit for a preeminent cultural facility, it was certainly still at the center of commercial and manufacturing activity, as the New Market Theater was quickly adapted for use by the Staver & Walker Company, makers of wagons and carriages.

At the end of the 1870s, Skidmore/Old Town was clearly still an integral part of the downtown commercial core with a strong waterfront industrial/mercantile character and a still healthy share of retail and office activity. Impressive multi-storied masonry and cast-iron buildings had largely replaced the district's early frontier-type, wood-frame buildings, reflecting the first decades of success of Portland's earliest generation of business leaders. First Street, anchored by the impressive New Market Block,⁸⁶ had emerged as a more genteel, retail- and office-oriented alternative to wholesale- and waterfront-flavored Front Street as a main thoroughfare. The 1879 *Oregon City Enterprise* enthused,

*First Street presents a gay and festive scene, and is encumbered with as much traffic, trading, strolling, beauty, and ornamental wealth as ere was Kearney Street, San Francisco. We cannot bring to mind a proportionate population that carried itself with so much dignity and importance as the metropolis of Oregon does.*⁸⁷

Maturity and Change, 1880–1900

Portland continued to grow in the period from 1880 through the turn of the century. In 1891 the city consolidated with the cities of Albina and East Portland on the east side of the Willamette, which had growing populations and expanding commercial economies of their own, continuing a sustained eastward urban expansion that shifted the city's population base—if not its political and economic gravity—away from the west side. Geographic, population and economic growth was facilitated by the first bridges across the river, beginning with the Morrison Bridge in 1887, the Steel Bridge just north of the district in 1888, and the first

⁸³ Portland's Chinese population in 1880 was 1,612, constituting 9.2 percent of the city's population. In 1890 it was 4,539 or 9.8 percent of the population, the highest historical percentage making the Chinese the largest group of foreign-born persons in the city. Marie Rose Wong, *Sweet Cakes, Long Journey: The Chinatowns of Portland, Oregon* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2004), 166.

⁸⁴ Hawkins, *Grand Era*, 68.

⁸⁵ Matthew P. Deady, *Pharisee among the Philistines: The Diary of Judge Matthew P. Deady, 1871-1892*, Malcolm Clark, Jr., ed. (Portland: Oregon Historical Society, 1975), 189.

⁸⁶ The "New Market Block" was composed of three connected structures: the 1871 New Market, South Wing (# 61), the 1872 New Market Theater proper (#45), and the 1873 New Market, North Wing (demolished in 1956).

⁸⁷ Hawkins, *Grand Era*, 18.

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Burnside Bridge in the center of Skidmore/Old Town in 1894. The expansion of public transit service accompanied the city's growth; the street railway companies shifted from horse power to electricity in 1891 by which time ten transit companies were in operation in the city.

When viewed in relation to regional urbanization trends, Portland's growth in this period was not as spectacular as in the previous three decades, however. Other Northwest cities, especially Seattle and Tacoma on Puget Sound and Spokane in the interior, had grown up and began to successfully challenge Portland's economic hegemony. In 1880 Portland had almost five times as many residents as Seattle (17,577 compared to 3,553). By 1890, Seattle's population had nearly caught up with Portland's (42,837 and 46,835, respectively) and by 1910 it would surpass Portland as the Northwest's largest city (237,174 and 207,214, respectively). Seattle's growth was fuelled by a growing lumber industry, the profitable Alaska/Yukon trade, new rail connections, and, some historians aver, a more entrepreneurial business community than that led by Portland's now venerable and conservative economic/political leaders. The rise of these other cities marked the maturing of the Pacific Northwest as a region, and a "new balance of metropolitan centers in the Northwest which was considerably more decentralized and complex than that which had existed during the earlier period of Portland's preeminence."⁸⁸ Tables 1 and 2 show the populations of Pacific Northwest cities over a 70-year period, illustrating this regional urbanizing trend. Through 1880, Portland was clearly the most significant Pacific Northwest city, almost five times larger than its nearest competitors, Walla Walla and Seattle. Just ten years later, Tacoma had risen as a major Northwest city and considered together with Seattle, the Puget Sound cities were now eclipsing Portland.

Railroads and Portland's Position in the Northwest

River- and ocean-going trade remained central to Portland's economy in this era. However, like it did throughout the West, the coming of the railroads altered Portland's transportation and economic landscape in profound and sometimes unexpected ways. Portland's preeminence as a commercial center during its first three decades was directly related to its ability to develop and control an extensive river transportation system that enabled a two-way flow of goods and products between the Pacific Northwest and extra-regional suppliers and markets. This system was the primary reason Portland was the Northwest's first and only true major urban center that was firmly established *prior* to the coming of a transcontinental railroad connection. However, Portland's economic elites, including the merchants and bankers of Skidmore/Old Town, were keenly aware that railroads were the critical engines of future economic growth and they fought long and hard to ensure that Portland would become the region's first transcontinental rail hub.

Efforts to bring the railroads to Portland began in the early 1860s with halting work to build a line through the Willamette Valley and southern Oregon to California (Eugene was reached in 1870, Roseburg in 1872, and Sacramento not until 1887, four years after Portland's transcontinental link was completed). The struggle to link the city with the East, a decades-long chapter in the larger story of western railroading, was replete with power struggles between international financiers, manipulations of federal land grants, shifting alliances between national and local promoters, businesses and real estate speculators, and a ruthless environment of competition between various interests—including Northwest cities and towns vying for a link to the continental system. After decades of uncertain progress, Portland's link was secured in 1883 with the completion of the Northern Pacific between St. Paul and the line's nominal "western terminus" at Portland, although, in fact, the line crossed the Columbia River by ferry at Kalama and continued north to Tacoma, where the Northern

⁸⁸ Johansen and Gates, *Empire of the Columbia*, 395.

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Pacific's main western maintenance facility was established. While the coming of the railroads is often credited with ushering in a long economic boom in the Northwest, its effects on Portland's economic growth and the city's status in relation to its hinterland and other Northwest cities were complex. The outcomes of completing the Northern Pacific in 1883, and securing another transcontinental link via the Union Pacific less than two years later, were not as singularly positive as many contemporaries had hoped, or as many still assume. By 1888, the Northern Pacific had completed a second, more direct connection to Puget Sound, branching from the mainline at Wallula and crossing the Cascades via Stampede Pass, thus avoiding the roundabout route along the Columbia River and bypassing Portland. Through the new route and a growing network of branch lines and joint leases between railroad companies, Seattle and Tacoma finally gained efficient connections to the Inland Empire, the Midwest and the East. With direct access to the Pacific Ocean offsetting potentially higher rail costs and Portland's river transportation advantages, the Puget Sound cities were able to successfully compete with Portland for much of the interior grain trade. While Portland continued to expand its grain trade economy, by 1910, Puget Sound ports (primarily Tacoma and Seattle) had firmly eclipsed those of the Columbia (primarily Portland and Astoria), exporting nearly twice as much grain (see Table 5).

So too, the integration of a continental rail system would diminish Portland's relative status as the region's primary wholesaling center and supplier of goods. The expanding rail network allowed other Northwest urban centers to more easily assume these functions within their own growing trade areas. Coinciding with broad national trends, the increasingly extensive and efficient rail system enabled large, "Gilded Age" midwestern and eastern corporations to reduce the importance of intermediary suppliers—which had been so central to Portland's commercial success. They could now directly market their goods to the Northwest's increasingly dispersed local wholesalers and retailers, and, with the rise of mail-order and catalog sales, even directly to consumers.

None of these trends spelled imminent doom for Portland or the merchants of Skidmore/Old Town. New investments in public infrastructure and private development, from improved shipping channels and extensive streetcar lines, to new eastside residential neighborhoods and increasingly larger downtown office buildings, are indicative that the city and its economy continued to grow in this era. But as the new century approached, the "economic dominion" that Portland had established over the Pacific Northwest by the 1880s had begun to fray, as other urban centers—most notably Seattle—matured, established their own hinterlands, and developed their own financial service capabilities. Portland was still a major western city, with a mature economy and significant competitive advantages. As late as 1913, a Federal Reserve committee found that Portland's preeminence in Pacific Northwest banking and finance had persisted well after Seattle had surpassed it in population and other urban statistical categories—but no longer was Portland *the* Metropolis of the Northwest.⁸⁹

Ethnicity, Urban Environment and Buildings, 1880 – 1900

In 1890, more than 37 percent of Portland's population was foreign-born and more than 58 percent had at least one parent born in a foreign country—by these measures making it one of the most ethnically diverse cities in the West, after only San Francisco and San Jose, California (see Table 8). The Chinese formed the largest single national/ethnic group in Portland in the late nineteenth century, with a population in 1880 of 1,612, constituting 9.2 percent of the city's total. By 1890 this grew to 4,539, making up 25.6 percent of the city's foreign-born population and 9.8 percent of the total. The same year, Germans made up the next largest foreign-born group, with 3,652 persons at 7.9 percent of the total population, followed by Great Britain at 4.5 percent,

⁸⁹ Pomeroy, *Pacific Slope*, 138.

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and Ireland at 3.5 percent. Most of the rest of the foreign-born population was from Canada and Scandinavian and Western European countries, with small groups from Russia, Italy and other nations (see Tables 6 and 7). Portland's African-American community was quite small; in 1860 there were but 16 persons listed by the US Census; in 1870 there were 147. By 1890, the African-American population had grown to 480, constituting only one percent of the city's total but accounting for about 40 percent of Oregon's total African-American population. In 1900 more than 70 percent of the state's African Americans lived in Portland (see Table 9).⁹⁰

With an area as geographically small as Skidmore/Old Town, it is difficult to chart with a high degree of precision historical patterns of ethnicity and nationality in isolation from the broader city. However, there is evidence suggesting that, throughout most of the period of significance, Skidmore/Old Town had an ethnically and socially diverse community of business owners, residents and workers. Perhaps not surprisingly, the highest levels of the district's economic ladder—the merchant, banking and propertied elite—were dominated by Yankees from the Northeast and British immigrants, although a number of Jews, predominantly immigrants from Germany, obtained considerable commercial and political success, for example Joe Simon, Bernard Goldsmith and Philip Wasserman. Other European nationalities represented in the district's merchant/capitalist class included Danes, such as Neils Blagen, builder of the 1888 Blagen Block (#71), and Russians.

Skidmore/Old Town's small business owners and labor force (as in western port cities more generally) were highly mobile, making their ethnicity more difficult to pin down. As a port-of-call for European, Asian, Pacific Island and American shipping, Portland drew fortune- and employment-seeking men (and in fewer numbers women) from all over the nation and many foreign countries. While many stayed, others labored for short stints on its wharves or in its warehouses and hotels, or ran a small shop for a time before moving on to other opportunities (California being a perennial draw). The district's lodging houses and hotels were occupied by large numbers of transient men looking for seasonal employment at a northwest lumber camp (a draw for many Scandinavians), mill, or farm, or to sign-up for a term on a steamer headed for the Sandwich Islands or Liverpool.

One of the most easily identifiable and significant immigrant communities in the city and Skidmore/Old Town was the Chinese, primarily from Canton (now Guangdong) Province, making up the largest single group of foreign-born in Portland for many decades. Portland's "Old Chinatown," which was coalescing by the 1860s, was located south of Skidmore/Old Town, centered on the intersection of Second and Alder. However, unlike in most other cities with large Chinese communities such as San Francisco, Tacoma, Chicago, and New York, which developed distinct, clearly-bounded Chinese enclaves, Portland's Chinese population settled in a less rigid spatial pattern. Skidmore/Old Town had a sizable number of Chinese businesses, despite its distance from the center of Old Chinatown.⁹¹ The "Chinese Directory" in Samuel's 1873 *City Directory* lists several such businesses, including wash-houses, stores, physicians and the employment office of Ah Luke on Front between Pine and Oak. Beginning in the period after the flood of 1894, much of the Chinese community began migrating away from Old Chinatown partly by rising real estate values in the portions of the downtown south of Skidmore/Old Town. Chinese businesses, social activities and residences migrated primarily to the area north of Burnside between Third and Fifth Avenues, soon known as "New Chinatown" and forming the nucleus of today's New Chinatown/Japantown Historic District, overlapping the Skidmore/Old Town Historic District along its western edges. The 1911 Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association Building (# 1) on NW Davis and the Hip Sing Association, in the former Portland Seamen's Bethel (# 3) on NW Third, are legacies of this spatial and demographic shift.

⁹⁰ Paul G. Merriam, "The 'Other Portland': A Statistical Note on the Foreign-Born," *OHQ* 80, no. 3 (Fall 1979); U.S. Census.

⁹¹ Wong, *Sweet Cakes*, 265-267.

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Most of Portland's small African-American population in the nineteenth century lived and worked in inner west-side neighborhoods, many in Skidmore/Old Town, where the community planted roots that persisted into the mid-twentieth century, when an influx of black workers serving the World War II ship building industry shifted the community's center of gravity to the East Side. In 1869, the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church was incorporated, meeting in a church they erected in the district on 3rd Avenue, between Burnside and Couch (demolished).

Most Portland African Americans were employed in services. According to one study, "the majority were stewards, waiters, cooks and porters" in the restaurant and hotel industries, which were well represented in Skidmore/Old Town. Others were employed in clothing manufacturing and shoemaking, and in various roles as laborers, boatmen, barbers, domestics, messengers, gardeners, and others. A small number of African Americans owned their own businesses, such as the aforementioned merchant Abner Francis. Others operated boarding houses, restaurants, saloons, and barbershops, often catering to the African-American community. African Americans, like the city's white and Chinese population, also actively participated in the "underworld" economy, in part because many "legitimate" employment opportunities were difficult or impossible to obtain. Much of the vice activity was centered in the "North End" (which included the historic district's northern half), where there was "more racial intermingling; Japanese, French, white and black women were employed as prostitutes in houses, or worked as waitresses and dancers. Black men owned saloons and gambling houses." Sensitive to public perceptions of the city's black community and critical of associations with gambling and prostitution, prominent Portland African-American newspaper publisher and real estate investor Adolphus Griffin commented in 1901 that, "if co-operative associations and business enterprises numbered among us as many as our pleasure clubs, we would be a more important factor in the commercial world."⁹²

Fine new commercial structures continued to rise in the district between 1880 and the turn of the century. The extant buildings dating from this period are not only among the most character-defining in the historic district, but also help to illuminate its social and ethnic history. The four-story Blagen Block (#71) was constructed in 1888 at First and Couch by Danish immigrant Neils (or Nils) J. Blagen, variously described as an architect, contractor and lumberman. It is one of the largest and most significant remaining cast-iron buildings on the West Coast, its impressive 100 feet of Italianate cast-iron street frontage recalling the rhythmic rows of columns and arches that once united numerous block fronts in early Portland. The building was constructed for the W. C. Noon Bag Company, one of the principal canvas manufacturers and distributors on the West Coast, whose tents, awnings, and sails were shipped from Portland to points throughout the West and beyond. In the 1890s, company partner L. F. Osborn, the first president of the Portland Chamber of Commerce and a bank director, expanded its business into building supplies, another important niche in Portland's economy—and one of its few manufacturing strengths—that supported development in the cities, farms and towns of the Far West.

The district saw a number of solid hotel and lodging structures built in this era, adding to and replacing the area's dwindling stock of smaller wooden lodging houses, many of which were in aging, formerly single-family houses. The newer residential structures were multi-storied and included ground-floor retail spaces. The Merchant Hotel (#s 12 and 28) was constructed in 1880 by brothers Louis, Adolphe, and Theodore Nicolai, German immigrants and wealthy pioneer Portland industrialists who operated lumber mills in Beaver Valley and Albina and had established the large Nicolai Brothers Co. (later Nicolai-Neppack Co.) planing mill and door and sash plant that filled the block bounded by First, Second, Everett and Davis in Skidmore/Old Town.

⁹² Elizabeth McLagan, *A Peculiar Paradise: A History of Blacks in Oregon, 1788-1940* (Portland, OR: Georgian Press, 1980), *passim*.

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Expanded in 1884, the Merchant was for a time one of the better Portland hotels, also containing retail and offices. Louis Nicolai's Portland Cracker Co. was housed in the building for a time. It also contained a dance hall and billiard room over the years.⁹³

From about 1904 to the mid-1940s, the Merchant was a central fixture in Portland's vital Japantown (*Nihonmachi*), another rich layer of Skidmore/Old Town's historical and cultural identity. Japanese professional offices, a bathhouse/barber/laundry for Japanese laborers, specialized grocery and dry good shops, and the offices of the Japanese newspaper *Oshu Nippo*, were all located in the building. Renovated in the early 2000s, it currently houses the Oregon Nikkei Legacy Center, a fitting home for this Japanese-American cultural institution.⁹⁴

The S. Ban Company Building (#14), constructed in the early 1890s on NW Third Avenue, housed a hotel on its upper floors, but is most significant for its associations with Shinsaburo Ban, whose offices and general store were located in the building for over three decades. Ban, a former Japanese diplomat, moved to Portland in 1891 and engaged in a number of business enterprises, including lumber milling, ranching, retailing and labor contracting. Aided by his diplomatic and business connections in Japan and excellent command of English, he became one of the most successful Japanese businessmen in the Far West. The S. Ban & Company firm, with branches in Colorado, Wyoming, and Japan, provided thousands of Japanese laborers to railroads, canneries, farms, mines, and other operations across the western states. Assisted by Portland's expanding shipping connections to Japan and running the largest Japanese business in Oregon, Ban was largely responsible for Portland becoming the most important Northwest distribution center for Japanese labor, primarily to the railroads.⁹⁵

Another example of a multi-use hotel building is the Sinnott House (#6), constructed in 1883 on the corner of NW Third and Couch by German-Jewish lawyer, businessman and power-broker Joseph Simon. Simon served as Portland mayor (1877, 1909-1911), state senator (1880-1891, 1895-1898), Republican state chairman (1880-1886), and U.S. Senator (1898-1904). Known as "Little Joe" by his allies and "The Boss" by his opponents, Simon was "clearly the most powerful individual in Oregon politics from 1880 to 1910."⁹⁶ Simon also built and owned the adjacent building at 105 NW Third (#5). Patrick Sinnott, an immigrant from Ireland who came to Portland in 1862, purchased the building (Sinnott House) from Simon in 1892. Sinnott served for 17 years as the Federal Indian Agent for the Grande Ronde Indian Reservation, beginning in 1872. The building served as a hotel for over a century. Its ground floor housed Murphey's Saloon in the 1890s. Some of its upper-story hotel rooms were used as offices, including that of dentist Koyama Kei, who served Japanese and other patients for over 35 years from this location.

The three-story Failing Building (#67) was built in 1883 on the northwest corner of First and Oak by successful merchant-capitalists Henry Failing, former Portland mayor and president of the First National Bank, and Simeon Reed, business partner of William Ladd, principal in the OSNC, and future benefactor of Reed College. Designed by one of the city's most prominent architects, Warren Williams, this well-built masonry and

⁹³ *American Preservation Magazine* (December-January 1978), 30; Lauren Rubin, "Merchant Steeped in City's History, Lore," *Oregonian*, December 8, 2005, "In Portland" section, page 12.

⁹⁴ George Katagiri et al., *Nihonmachi: Portland's Japantown Remembered* (Portland, OR: Oregon Nikkei Legacy Center, 2002), passim.

⁹⁵ Oregon Historical Society, "Shinzaburo Ban," Oregon History Project, <http://www.ohs.org/education/oregonhistory/>; Katagiri, *Nihonmachi*, 4.

⁹⁶ MacColl, *Merchants, Money and Power*, 243-246; Lowenstein, *Jews of Oregon*, 61-63.

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structural iron building finished in stucco and decorative cast iron was built as a wholesale and office facility. Its early tenants included the typical Skidmore/Old Town wholesale firm of Sichel & Mayer, cigar importers, and the J. K. Gill Company, a major Pacific Northwest wholesale and retail stationer, bookseller and publisher and a Portland business fixture well into the late twentieth century.⁹⁷

The 1893 Haseltine Building (#36) was constructed at Pine and Second by merchant, real estate investor and bank officer James E. Haseltine who came to Portland in the early 1880s, after operating a successful hardware business in Portland, Maine, (where he also served on the City Council), and a three year stint mining in California. He soon gained an interest in the established hardware firm of E. J. Northrup & Co., eventually controlling it and reincorporating as the J. E. Haseltine Co. The firm operated out of the Haseltine Building for many years, selling heavy equipment, hardwood lumber and wagon-making materials throughout Oregon, Washington, Idaho, Montana and Northern California.⁹⁸ The structure's rusticated stonework and massive arches exemplify the transition to the new Richardsonian Romanesque vocabulary in Portland's commercial architecture.

Two significant buildings from this era, the 1882 Portland Mariner's Home (#2) and the circa 1889 Seamen's Bethel (#3) on NW Third and Davis, add another dimension to our understanding of Skidmore/Old Town and its role as an international port district. While the district's commercial buildings remind us of one facet of Portland's mercantile economy—the accumulation of wealth and power by successful traders—the Mariners' Home and Seamen's Bethel evoke another—the lives of the maritime laborers upon whom a trade economy depended. These buildings were constructed by the Portland Seamen's Friend Society, formed in 1877 as an affiliate of the American Seamen's Friend Society which was founded in 1826 in New York and dedicated to improving the “social and moral condition of seamen.” In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, sailors were one of the most vulnerable and abused labor forces in the world. Paid low wages and subject to appalling conditions, sailors had fewer rights than most other workers. For instance, under international maritime law, seamen's ability to terminate employment was sharply restricted even under flagrant contract violations and abusive treatment by employers. In 1897 the U.S. Supreme Court affirmed the semi-indentured status of seamen, noting that they were, “deficient in that full and intelligent responsibility for their acts which is accredited to ordinary adults.” Ships which often released their crews while in-port awaiting cargoes, were frequently hard to man and desertions were common. In ports around the world, *crimping*—the semi-legitimate practice of third-party buying and selling of seamen's terms-of-labor (often involving entrapment or forced debt), and *Shanghaiing*—essentially kidnapping and enslavement—were regularly used to crew ocean vessels. This system was widely decried but well-established, and it implicitly involved the collaboration of ship captains, traders, port officials, lodging house and saloon operators, and a cadre of professional and often criminal employment brokers known as “crimps.” The Columbia River ports of Astoria and Portland suffered a particularly “vile reputation on an international scale,” with Portland's notorious crimps such as Bunco Kelly and Jim Turk becoming the stuff of legend.⁹⁹

The Portland Seamen's Friend Society was organized to address the worst of these practices and to provide services to sailors and longshoremen, such as safe housing, meals, reading material, sermonizing, and advocacy. Prominent merchants and businessmen serving on its board included Henry Corbett, Donald Macleay, William Ladd, Rodney Glisan, James Steel and Edward Quackenbush. Like most charitable organizations of the time, it had a decidedly Christian orientation as well as a healthy dose of temperance. Their first chapel, kitchen,

⁹⁷ Hawkins, *Grand Era*, 150.

⁹⁸ Gaston, *Portland*, Vol. II, 150-156.

⁹⁹ Denise Alborn, “Crimping and Shanghaiing on the Columbia River,” *OHS Quarterly* 93, no. 3 (Fall 1992): 262-291.

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reading room and chaplain's quarters were housed in a wooden structure relocated to the Third and Davis site in 1879 (the former Gem Saloon building, portions of which may have been incorporated in the existing Seamen's Bethel structure). In a report to the national organization, Portland's chaplain Richard Gilpin noted that in 1887 he had preached at Bethel 142 times to 3,478 individuals, visited 114 ships a total of 358 times and conducted Bible study and singing classes. He also stated that "forty apprentices and sailors signed the teetotal pledge," an altogether low, if perhaps unsurprising, success rate, given the hard-drinking reputation of his mariner flock."¹⁰⁰ A central concern of the Portland Seamen's Friend Society was the abusive elements of crimping. After working for several years to raise funds from Portland's leading businessmen and the likes of international rail magnate Henry Villard and Liverpool grain trader and shipping tycoon W. A. Guthrie, the society built a "Mariners' Home," on the site in 1882, providing a safer and more respectable alternative to the many suspect sailors' lodging houses that were frequently complicit in crimping and Shanghaiing. An addition was completed around 1889. However, the society was unable to manage its debt and was forced to rent-out portions of the building and eventually sell it. The structure housed the Portland Hospital for a time circa 1890 and later the California Lodging House on its upper floors with various retail uses in the storefronts below. The buildings stand today, highlighting Skidmore/Old Town's early role in providing transient housing and other "social services" oriented to the international maritime labor force that supported the city's critical shipping functions.¹⁰¹

Effects of Flooding

In the 1880s and 1890s Skidmore Old/Town was a vital commercial area and central to downtown's urban fabric. A visitor in the early '80s found that Front Street's impressive brick and cast-iron houses created a "metropolitan appearance unlooked for in a place of this size."¹⁰² The area's waterfront location, although still fundamental to the city's economic viability, was slowly becoming more of a liability, however. By 1903, Portland had experienced at least five major floods and numerous lesser ones since its founding. The flood of 1894 covered 250 square blocks, swept away wharves and warehouses, ruptured gas and sewer lines, and washed away impermanent pavements such as wood and macadam. On Front Street, the floodwaters inundated the first floors of all its establishments. Boat traffic on city streets was brisk, however, and some enterprising merchants made the best of it. August Erickson, proprietor of the famous saloon on NW Second Avenue (#31) boasting the longest bar in the world (684 feet), "rented a houseboat and stocked it full of booze and other necessities for his thirsty customers... Row boats, homemade crafts, catamarans and canoes brought customers to the floating saloon... Some of the customers never left the floating saloon until the waters receded and they were broke."¹⁰³

Illustrative of the deleterious effects of flooding on the district's fortunes over time is the story of Bernard Freimann's upscale restaurant and catering business located at the corner of First and Oak (#84, #89). Ben Freimann (AKA Ben Freeman) was an internationally prominent and peripatetic linguist, real estate speculator, hotelier, diplomat, spy, and all-around adventurer in the Victorian mold. Well-connected to Portland's power brokers and financial leaders, he earned one of his many and transient fortunes in an East Portland and Albina

¹⁰⁰ "Portland, Ore., Seamen's Friend Society," *Sailors' Magazine* 60, no. 7 (July 1888): 199-201.

¹⁰¹ Portland Seamen's Friend Society Records, Oregon Historical Society; Seamen's Abuses: Pamphlets, Scrap Books and Letters on Seamen's Abuses at Astoria and Portland, Wilson Room, Multnomah County Library, Oregon; "Portland Seamen's Bethel," *Daily Oregonian*, September 13, 1880.

¹⁰² Olive Rand, *A Vacation Excursion*, 1884, 133, quoted in Pomeroy, *Pacific Slope*, 138.

¹⁰³ E. Kimbark MacColl, *The Shaping of a City: Business and Politics in Portland, Oregon 1885-1915* (Portland: The Georgian Press, 1976), 170.

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development syndicate of the 1870s that included prominent Portland businessmen William D. Ladd, Henry Failing and Harvey Scott. Returning to Portland in 1885 after an absence, he opened “The New Freimann Coffee House and Restaurant” in a new brick building located at 11 Oak Street (now 79 SW Oak, #84). He had operated a similar venture in 1875 on Washington Street. It was perhaps Portland’s most prominent restaurant, serving the city’s most distinguished citizens and visitors. He expanded into the adjacent building and established a successful catering business. In 1886 he hosted a banquet for world-famous French actress Sarah Bernhardt, who was in town to dedicate the new (uptown) Marquam Theater. Bernhardt had heard of Freimann’s excellent reputation and made many demands, but, according to Freimann, upon tasting his *pâté de sauté de foie de volaille* “went into hysterics. Tears of joy ran down her cheeks.”¹⁰⁴

However, disaster struck with the flood of 1890 leaving “nothing but desolation and dirt” in his building after the water receded. His wealthy friends ensured that he received the loans needed to rebuild his business. But when the even more devastating flood of 1892 struck, dislodging the building from its foundation and destroying his restaurant, saloon, kitchens and wine cellar, Freimann was unable to pay his debts. He turned over all his property to his creditors, including his Portland home, ocean-front property, and undeveloped land in Albina, and moved to Honolulu. Old Town was clearly a difficult place to operate a business at times, and increasingly businesses not dependant on proximity to the waterfront chose to locate elsewhere, when they had the means to do so.

The Skidmore Fountain

One of the most significant and symbolically rich resources in Skidmore/Old Town, indeed all of Portland, is the fountain for which the district is named. Erected in 1888 just north of the New Market Theater, it was Portland’s first piece of public art and remains one of its finest. The idea for the fountain had its genesis in a bequest from druggist, businessman and City Councilman Stephen Skidmore, whose father Andrew had operated a store and hotel in the district beginning in 1849. Skidmore had left \$5,000 to the city, specifying in his will that it be used for “the erection of a Drinking Fountain to be placed in such public place as the City authorities may direct.” The popular notion that it was intended for “men, horses and dogs” was expressed in contemporary newspapers and has been perpetuated in many accounts over the years, but Skidmore’s actual bequest is silent on this issue.¹⁰⁵

Taking up the cause, pioneer merchant and former mayor Henry Failing consulted with prominent and somewhat bohemian lawyer Charles Erskine Scott Wood about an appropriate design for the fountain. Rejecting several initial ideas, they agreed that the fountain deserved to be a civic monument of the first order and required the “very best” artist they could find. Wood, a celebrated and well-connected poet and painter in his own right, contacted two of the most highly esteemed sculptors in the country, Olin Warner and Augustus Saint-Gaudens. Saint-Gaudens was too busy to accept the commission, but Warner accepted. Such talent did not come cheap; final design and fabrication in New York and Philadelphia would cost \$18,000. Failing raised the additional \$13,000 from among the city’s well-to-do, including a large, unspecified sum from banker Tyler Woodward, who conditioned his gift with the proviso that the fountain be placed opposite a parcel he owned on First Street. It was an appropriate location, however, located as it was in the center of the old business district. The City vacated a 23-foot space for the fountain at the intersection of First, Vine and Ankeny, putting it in the

¹⁰⁴ Professor Freeman [Bernard Freimann], *Freeman of Stamboul: Being the Memoirs of Professor Freeman* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1934), 219.

¹⁰⁵ Donald J. Sterling Jr. “Skidmore Really Didn’t Rank Women below Horses, Dogs,” *Oregonian*, October 9, 1987; Charles Erskine Scott Wood, “The Skidmore Fountain,” *Oregon Historical Quarterly* (June 1933): 97-102.

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center of a unique, irregularly shaped open area where the streets of the original Portland plat meet at an offset those of Couch's Addition. Warner came to Portland to inspect the site to ensure that the fountain was designed in "proper scale and harmony" with its surroundings. The exceptional space the fountain occupies remains among the city's most intimately urban and charming.

Executed in bronze and orange-hued granite, the classically inflected fountain's shallow top-basin is supported by a pair of caryatids flanking an ionic column rising from a wider octagonal pool. The elegant fountain was immediately hailed as a masterpiece, both locally and nationally. *Century* magazine noted in 1889 that there was "nothing so beautiful in statuary westward of Chicago." Art critic W. C. Brownell stated in *Scribner's* in 1896 that the fountain represented "the high mark of American imaginative sculpture."¹⁰⁶

The historical significance of the Skidmore Fountain for Portland and Skidmore/Old Town is multi-faceted. As a nationally recognized piece of public art, it symbolizes the city's coming of age as a major urban center. To Portland's late nineteenth-century citizens it was a source of civic pride, that, like the New Market Theater 15 years earlier, announced that Portland was at last worthy of inclusion among the ranks of the nation's culturally sophisticated cities. However, some contemporary remarks about the fountain reveal the "East Coast" bias typically leveled against "upstart" Western cities that, ironically, projects like the Skidmore Fountain were intended to counter. For instance, the New York *Tribune*, commenting about the work when it was first previewed in New York, praised the fountain itself, but bemoaned that it was intended "for a western city with its bewhiskered, bepistoled lot of frontiersmen."¹⁰⁷ W. C. Brownell might have found it "the high mark" in American sculpture, but he also wrote: "the fact that Warner's figures look calmly down upon buggies and buck-boards, and shirt-sleeves and slouch hats in Oregon, instead of decorating [New York's] Central Park, is grotesquely significant of much."¹⁰⁸ Such remarks, and the indignant responses from Portlanders, evoke a historical sensitivity to the judgments of outsiders that is sometimes still evident in Portland today.

If the fountain was in one sense a crowning cultural achievement for Portland, its completion in 1888 corresponds more-or-less with the city's zenith as *the* metropolis of the Northwest, a status it was beginning to lose to faster growing Seattle. So too, its siting "downtown" in the center of the ageing first business district seems, in hindsight, a bit ironic, as the action was increasingly heading "uptown," away from the fountain and the district itself. If the fountain is today no longer in the physical center of downtown, it retains its symbolic status as a cultural landmark central to Portland's civic identity. C. E. S. Wood's words inscribed on its base, "Good citizens are the riches of a city," continue to resonate with Portlanders, evoking not only Stephen Skidmore's gift to the city and those of other wealthy Portlanders, but the high level of civic engagement for which Portland's citizens are nationally known.

Downtown Moves Uptown, 1900 – 1929

The first quarter of the twentieth century in Portland was marked by enormous changes, many driven by technological advances in moving goods and people that swept much of the country. In this era the automobile came into its own as the preferred form of personal transportation. Between 1910 and 1926, six new auto-accommodating bridges spanned the Willamette. Ever-larger cargo ships spurred improvements to the Columbia and Willamette shipping channels and the construction of large, publicly-owned dock facilities in the lower Willamette Harbor area, south of downtown. In 1929, Portland's first commercial airport was

¹⁰⁶ Snyder, *Skidmore's Portland*, 134.

¹⁰⁷ Joe Bianco, "Famed Fountain," *Oregonian*, April 5, 1964, 10.

¹⁰⁸ Snyder, *Skidmore's Portland*, 134.

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established.

Portland continued to grow. Between 1900 and 1910, Portland's population more than doubled in size from 90,424 to 207,214. By the 1920s, almost fifty square miles of land on the east side of the Willamette River had been added to the City since 1891, housing over 70 percent of the city's population. Many historians have linked Portland's growth in this period to its successful efforts to promote the city and region nationally and internationally. The booster spirit of nineteenth-century "upstart towns", to use Daniel Boorstin's phrase, was clearly evident during Portland's first half century, from the promotional writings of the *West Shore* magazine, to the more ambiguous intermingling of public and private interests evident in the efforts by the city's leading capitalists to bring railroads to Portland. However, the epitome of Portland's boosterism was undoubtedly the 1905 Lewis and Clark Centennial Exposition and Oriental Fair. Touted as celebrating the centennial of the Lewis and Clark Expedition's foray into the Oregon Country, the extravagant event used a nostalgic veil of history to promote regional investment and American imperialist ideals. Erected amidst a marshy lagoon on the northwestern outskirts of the city, attractions included sentimental statuary evoking the values of Manifest Destiny, a basilica-like edifice constructed of old growth logs, and even Venetian canals.¹⁰⁹

The fair was a rousing success from the perspective of Portland's political and economic elite, who had pulled the event together, for a decade-long economic boom followed the fair, with an influx of new residents in the growing eastside "streetcar suburbs" and massive private investment in new downtown commercial buildings. However, the boom did not affect all parts of the City equally. Although new construction occurred in Skidmore/Old Town, Portland's central business district continued to shift south and west, away from the flood-prone, rough-and-ready waterfront—and the Skidmore/Old Town district. As the era of the skyscraper dawned (or, perhaps more accurately in Portland, the era of the proto-skyscraper), the city's newest, tallest, and most modern buildings were being sited farther "uptown," reflecting and precipitating a number of changes in the district.

Spatial Shifts in the Central Business District

While it had always had a large share of the city's bread-and-butter wholesale, distribution and transportation services, Skidmore/Old Town had also been a part of the city's financial/office district, with its banks, lawyers, notaries, and insurance agents, as well as higher-end retail operations that serviced them, such as restaurants, hotels and tailors. However, in the early twentieth century, high rent-paying office and retail businesses began moving to newer and more fashionable uptown buildings and locations, increasing the overall proportion of manufacturing, wholesale and warehousing activities in Old Town. This shift was driven by a number of positive and negative locational factors, ranging from the desire for more distance from the working waterfront to the real estate premium and high status of close proximity to important civic buildings, such as city hall and courthouses, sited to the south and west. For instance, in 1907, Wells, Fargo completed what is commonly considered Portland's first "skyscraper," a twelve-story commercial tower west of the district at Sixth and Oak into which moved Wells Fargo itself and the offices of the Oregon Railway and Navigation Company (successor to the Oregon Steam Navigation Company), two major corporations long associated with Skidmore/Old Town. The international grain trading firm of Balfour Guthrie, which had a long-standing presence in Portland, built its new corporate office well away from the waterfront at SW Stark and Sixth in 1916. Construction of increasingly large downtown commercial buildings is illustrated on Map MO2, which charts patterns of "vertical density" (i.e. building heights) in 1879 and 1908 and clearly shows the westward and

¹⁰⁹ See Abbott, *The Great Extravaganza: Portland and the Lewis and Clark Exposition* (Portland, OR: Oregon Historical Society Press, 2004).

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southward shift of the Central Business District's center of gravity away from Skidmore/Old Town and the riverfront.

The upper floors of many structures, once occupied by office activities, were increasingly used for storage and warehousing. In some cases upper floors, whether once offices or warehouses were converted to low-end, sub-standard lodgings. The formerly vital wharves were used less and began to decay, as the city's port activities shifted away from the older, smaller, and privately-owned downtown docks to larger and more modern down-river shipping facilities, including the new publicly-owned municipal terminals, proximate to large tracts of land suited for industrial expansion. Construction of the now numerous downtown Willamette River bridges had made it more difficult for vessels to access the wharves of Skidmore/Old Town and the upper harbor and ever-larger ocean ships increasingly found the narrower width of the river in the downtown insufficient for maneuvering and turning.

While First Street continued to have a retail orientation, it was no longer Portland's preeminent shopping area. In 1915, First Street retailers organized a booster group, the First Street Progressive Men's Association, to reinvigorate the area, its president lamenting that, "we don't deny that the city has moved away from us."¹¹⁰

Mirroring a national trend in which hotel living became increasingly less "respectable," many of the district's older hotels lost prestige and served a more transient and working-class clientele, although several new residential hotels built after the turn of the century maintained good reputations for a time. However, residential hotels, now often referred to as "Single Room Occupancy" hotels, were suspect in the eyes of many along with the district's lodging and boarding houses. Built in 1911, the Foster Hotel at 216 NW Third Avenue (#11) was a solid and dignified structure but its 180 small rooms lacked private bathing facilities. In the 1930s it housed Japanese workers and a Judo parlor. The Norton House (#55), located at First and Couch, had been heralded by *West Shore* magazine at the time of its opening in 1877 noting that it possessed "all the modern conveniences." But, as its current heritage plaque notes, it "may have had difficulty maintaining a first class hotel status, surrounded ... by sailors' saloons, laundries, heavy industry and houses of ribald reputation."

Notwithstanding notable changes in the early twentieth century, patterns of continuity in the district's character and functions are also evident, including its ongoing critical place in the city's economic geography. Many of its trade and manufacturing businesses continued to prosper, evidenced by major investments in new structures. In 1903, the George Lawrence Company completed an elegant quarter-block, four-story building at First and Oak, designed by the prominent architectural firm of Whidden and Lewis (#85). Described in 1905 as a "wholesale manufacturer of harnesses and saddlery" and "importers and jobbers of saddlery, hardware, leather, whips and robes," the company had deep roots in the district. Founded in 1857 by pioneer Samuel Sherlock, who operated a saddlery and leather shop at 52 Front Street, the company thrived under the leadership of Sherlock's brother-in-law George Lawrence from 1876 to 1922, reportedly employing as many as 250 workers during World War I. In response to the decline of horse-driven transportation, they expanded their product line in the 1920s to include auto supplies and other products although their now-legendary gun belts and holsters continued to be signature products until the business was sold in the 1980s. Occupying the First Street building until 1985, the George Lawrence Company's longevity over more than a century illustrates the historical continuity of Skidmore/Old Town's commercial and industrial economy and its adaptability to broad social and

¹¹⁰ "Prosperity Nicknames Old Business Thoroughfare Easy Street—No Depression," clipping from unknown 1915 newspaper, Vertical File "Portland Streets," Oregon Historical Society, Portland (hereafter cited as OHS). See also Chris Sawyer, *From White Chapel to Old Town: The Life and Death of the Skid Row District, Portland, Oregon* (PhD diss., Portland State University, 1985), 212.

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economic changes.¹¹¹

In this period, the Chinese and Japanese communities continued to be perhaps the most recognizable ethnic groups within the district, but new groups added to the ethnic mix. In the early twentieth century, Portland's Greek population grew rapidly. In 1900, the census listed only six heads-of-household within Multnomah County who were born in Greece; by 1910 the number had grown to 921, with the area along and near lower Burnside forming an important residential and commercial nucleus for the community. The Maletis Brothers Grocery Store, located first in the building that now houses the Oregon Leather Company (#40) and later in the Estate Hotel (# 13), opened circa 1917 by Greek immigrants James, Peter and Chris Maletis. It served not only the North End's growing Greek population and the large number of Greek sailors that passed through, but also catered to other ethnic groups. James Maletis' daughter Mary, who worked there beginning as a small girl, noted in 1979 that, "Our shelf stock has always reflected the neighborhood. Besides Greek we've had every kind of food from Scandinavian to Japanese."¹¹²

Vice, Social Services, and Labor: the Emergence of Skid Road

As a waterfront area, Skidmore/Old Town had long had its share of activities that affronted the nineteenth-century bourgeois morals shared by many of Portland's citizens and leaders. As the city's spatial organization became more hierarchical and its land uses more segregated, "high culture," once epitomized by the New Market Theater, moved away from the district and "vice" operations—brothels, saloons, gambling halls, arcades, dance halls, etc.—became more concentrated, or at least more prominent in what was known as the "North End."¹¹³ Historian Gloria Myers describes the area (also sometimes called "White Chapel" after London's notorious red light district) in the first decade of the twentieth century:

The North End district boasted the usual features of western port cities. Merchant seamen, traveling salesmen, loggers, farm hands and soldiers from the nearby Vancouver Barracks strolled the cobbled streets in search of a "good time." Blocks of shanty "cribs," which ... were rented to individual prostitutes "for \$15 a week," coexisted with grand bordellos housing dozens of "sporting women." ... The "favorite combination," according to a contemporary [1913] survey on vice abatement, was "a saloon, a grill, and a house of prostitution, all in the same building, same block, or immediate vicinity."¹¹⁴

Of particular notoriety was the block bounded by Second and Third, and Couch and Burnside, known as the "blazing center," described by an *Oregon Journal* writer: "Here were the Erickson, Fritz and Blazier saloons, with the House of all Nations opposite Erickson's on the northeast corner of Second and Burnside. Lights glared, music blared, chips rattled and glasses clinked from dark till the milkman made his rounds."¹¹⁵

¹¹¹ Donald R. Nelson, *Progressive Portland II: Stop and Go* (Portland: Donald Nelson, 2006), 20-21; George Lawrence Co., <http://www.vintagegunleather.com/companyhistories.htm>; 1865 *Portland City Directory*.

¹¹² Ryan, *Burnside: A Community*, 1979, 18; Sara Cox, Maletis Brothers Grocery Store, <http://www.oldtown.pdx.edu/maletis.htm>.

¹¹³ Just as the current historic district's boundaries do not conform precisely to Portland's "first downtown," neither do they conform to the area once referred to as the North End, which was generally north of Burnside Street stretching from the waterfront west through New Chinatown to the North Park Blocks.

¹¹⁴ Gloria E. Meyers, *A Municipal Mother: Portland's Lola Greene Baldwin, America's First Policewoman* (Corvallis, Oregon: Oregon State University Press, 1995), 93. Meier's less-scholarly book, *Those Naughty Ladies of the Old Northwest*, contains interesting anecdotal accounts of prostitution in early Portland. For an in depth study of the North End as a vice district and skid road see Sawyer, *From Whitechapel to Old Town*.

¹¹⁵ MacColl, *Merchants, Money, and Power*, 342

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Erickson's Saloon (# 31), the "Workingmen's Club" as its sign declared, was founded in the 1880s and gained fame for its 684-foot bar and legendary free lunch. In 1913, Gus Erickson sold the saloon building to Fred Fritz, owner of the adjacent Fritz Theater, a notorious burlesque house tied to gambling and prostitution. Fritz razed several buildings on the block, built new structures incorporating some of the previous structures and reestablished the "blazing center's" saloon, theater and hotel businesses.¹¹⁶ It is unclear whether the block's lively reputation was changed much by the new digs.

Illustrative of efforts of Old Town businesses to bolster the perception of the area was a 1914 plan to illuminate every intersection on Third Avenue. From Yamhill Street north through the Skidmore/Old Town neighborhood to Glisan Street, a series of imposing luminated arches were built with the intention of luring commerce back toward the river. Reminiscent of medieval groin vaults and recalling the 1905 Fair's impressive displays of decorative outdoor lighting, the structures were glowing downtown icons until their removal in the 1930s for what was considered more practical lighting.¹¹⁷

Contemporaries clearly viewed Old Town as suffering from a decline in fortune and status. From a broader historical perspective, the changes in the area exemplify significant shifts in urban spatial organization seen in the downtowns of trade-centered, waterfront cities across the West and the nation. Urban geographer Larry Ford describes the typical conversion of historical city cores into "zones of discard" as the "peak land value intersection"¹¹⁸ moved over time from the "semi-industrial chaos of the waterfront, with its flood hazards and congestion, to an area on higher ground which was once a zone of better residences."¹¹⁹ The older zone of discard, better known as "Skid Road" or "Skid Row", with its aging and underutilized building stock and marginalized population of the down-and-out, became a defining feature of the twentieth century city.¹²⁰ By mid-century, Portland's Skid Road came to encompass all of the original waterfront downtown—with Skidmore/Old Town at the center (see Map MO3).¹²¹

Despite, on the one hand, contemporary concerns about the district's decline and the growing impetus to redevelop and "improve" it that would eventually result in the demolition of many historic structures, Skidmore/Old Town, as a part of Portland's Skid Road, served important functions within the social, cultural and economic ecologies of the city and the region. Its transient housing, employment agencies, popular entertainment venues, aid societies, missions, and labor organizations served the northwest's large itinerant working population—the loggers, mill workers, miners, farm hands and other workers who seasonally migrated to large urban centers in search of their next job or a place to spend their "stake." Portland's status as a major urban hub with a burgeoning economy and developed transportation linkages, in combination with

¹¹⁶ Historic Preservation Certification Application—Part 1 Erickson's Hotel, dated September 10, 1982; In City of Portland, Land Use Review file HLDZ 2-83. See also Stewart Holbrook, "Erickson's: Elbow Bending for Giants," in *Wildmen, Wobblies and Whistle Punks: Stewart Holbrook's Lowbrow Northwest*, ed. Brian Booth (Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 1992), 217-222.

¹¹⁷ Catherine Sohm, *A History of Street Lighting in Portland, Oregon* (Portland: The City of Portland, Office of Transportation, 1997) 9.

¹¹⁸ Essentially, it is the area of highest land values, typically within the CBD, and theoretically a function of high accessibility and maximum opportunity for interaction and economic transaction.

¹¹⁹ Larry Ford, *Cities and Buildings: Skyscrapers, Skid Rows, and Suburbs* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), 64-65.

¹²⁰ The older term "Skid Road" is used here in preference to the increasingly more common "Skid Row," reflecting western states usage and the original reference to logging roads paved with tree trunks, or skids, and, by association, the area of a town where loggers congregated, usually a rough neighborhood or red-light district.

¹²¹ Donald J. Bogue, *Skid Row in American Cities* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1963), 35.

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Skidmore/Old Town's geographic centrality, numerous potential employers, and constant stream of newcomers, made the district a logical center of gravity for employment offices, labor organizations, and other institutions and activities that supported or were supported by the working classes and other vulnerable elements of society. The aforementioned Mariners' Home and Seamen's Bethel (#2, #3) which served the needs of maritime labor are early examples that recall aspects of these critical social functions. Places like Erickson's Saloon (#31) or Fred Fritz' hotel/theater/saloon operations (#18), as venues for "vices" such as gambling and prostitution—activities that clearly have socially corrosive effects—are perhaps more problematic examples. However, saloons, burlesque theaters, shooting galleries, billiard halls and the like were important institutions that provided social spaces for "working stiffs" and others who were not welcome at the uptown Arlington Club or Ben Freimann's upscale restaurant on nearby First and Oak (#89, #84). They were places of relief and fellowship (and occasional danger) but also supplied valuable services, such as inexpensive meals, informal banking and mail delivery, that were not otherwise available to the chronically underemployed, homeless and stigmatized (see Map MO5).

With the rise of radical labor movements around the turn of the century, groups like the International Workers of the World, or Wobblies, found a natural home in Skidmore/Old Town, among the northwest's growing "special labor force, the mobile and deracinated, upon which the expanding industries of the region more and more depended."¹²² One of the earliest Wobbly Halls on the West Coast was opened in 1907 in the ground floor of the hotel on the northwest corner of West Burnside and Third Avenue (demolished).¹²³ From here, the first Wobbly-led strike in the Pacific Northwest was coordinated, with 2,000 mill workers walking out and shutting down all of the city's lumber mills and many of the Columbia Region's logging camps in March 1907.¹²⁴

Portland's Wobbly Halls (another was probably located in the district circa 1919 in the Rich Hotel on North Second Street (#29), another at 222-224 West Burnside (#20), and the 1910 City Directory shows an IWW Reading Room at 33 North Fourth Street) were "more than mere union halls. They served as social clubs, dormitories, mess halls and mail drops." Portland's most famous radical John Reed (the only American buried in the Kremlin) noted that "wherever...there is an IWW local, you will find an intellectual center—a place where men read philosophy, economics, the latest plays, novels; where art and poetry are discussed, and international politics. In my native place, Portland, Oregon, the IWW hall was the liveliest intellectual center in town."¹²⁵

Other unions had their headquarters in the district, including the Marine Workers Industrial Union (MWIU), housed in the Foster Hotel (#11). A radical, communist-led organization formed as an alternative to what was

¹²² Robert Tyler, *Rebels of the Woods: The I.W.W. in the Pacific Northwest* (Eugene: University of Oregon Books, 1967), 31.

¹²³ Sources consulted are conflicting on the location of the first IWW hall. Shawn Lingo places it in the hotel on the northwest corner of West Burnside and Third, a structure that was only recently demolished and was the only contributing structure demolished in the district since its nomination to the National Register. Michael Munk places it at 493 West Burnside, a street address not currently in use but presumably indicating the 1907 Grove Hotel (401-439 W. Burnside, just outside Skidmore/Old Town in the New Chinatown/Japan Town Historic District). Photos in the City Archives from 1928 show a Wobbly Hall on the second floor of the noncontributing building across Burnside (#20) from the Wax Building (#19). Shawn Lingo, "The IWW and the Disappearance of Portland's Working Class Cultural Landscape or Floppin' in the Hall," *The Journal of the Associated Students for Historic Preservation* 18, no. 1 (Spring 2005): 6,7; Michael Munk, *The Portland Red Guide: Sites & Stories of Our Radical Past* (Portland: Ooligan Press, 2007).

¹²⁴ Tyler, *Rebels*, 54-55

¹²⁵ John Reed, *Liberator*, September 1918, as quoted in Franklin Rosemount, *Joe Hill: The IWW & the Making of a Revolutionary Workingclass Counterculture* (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr, 2003), 34.

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seen as the conservatism and corruption of the International Longshoremen's Association, the MWIU was active in the great Maritime Strike of 1934 that rocked West Coast ports, including Portland, where "special police" deputized by Mayor Carson fired on picket lines and wounded four workers.¹²⁶

An important focal point for Portland and West Coast radicalism was jeweler Tom Burns's activist bookstore "The Clock Shop" (the signage read "Clocks-Jewelry-Read-Think-Learn") located on Burnside between North Third and Fourth and later in the Wax Building at Burnside and North Third (#19). Here one could borrow books by Karl Marx and Eugene Debs from the lending library in the basement, buy the latest issue of *The Masses* for a dime, or pick up Burns's own leftist newsletter, *FAX*, which attacked, among others, Portland's "political parasites—the first families like the Corbetts, Labbes, Wilcoxes—coupon clipping clowns that never did a useful day's work in the worthless lives." Active in the socialist and labor movements from before World War I until the 1950s, Burns was an icon of the city's radical scene and was known as the "Mayor of Burnside."¹²⁷

In 1946, after the fiery radicalism of the first half of the century had waned, Stewart Holbrook evoked the deep symbolic association between radicalized labor and the Skidmore/Old Town area when he described Arthur Boose, the "last of the Wobbly paper boys" hawking the *Industrial Worker*, as he had for two decades, on the corner of Third and Burnside, in the "most celebrated Skidroad in Oregon, or on Earth."¹²⁸

Surviving "Civic Improvements:" Demolition, Adaptation and Preservation, 1929 – the Present

"Portland's almost last link with the dusty past is about to go. The ornate façaded fronts of Front Avenue Buildings will fall to the wrecker's zeal, and in their place will rise the austere severity of modern architecture. The cobblestones of the narrow streets will disappear under the paving of the new super-highway, and the last gas-mantle lamp will metamorphize into neon. So look your last, Portland, as old Front Avenue goes glimmering. A new day is coming!"—Oregon Journal, May 11, 1941.¹²⁹

Before the 1920s, periodic flooding, the loss of shipping activities, and other economic and social trends contributed to the decline of Front and First streets as preeminent commercial streets and Skidmore/Old Town as an economically vital part of the downtown. With construction of the new Burnside Bridge in 1926, the pace of change quickened. West Burnside Street was widened for several blocks requiring major alterations to commercial buildings at the center of the historic district, many being essentially chopped in half. The widening also increased Burnside's role as a major east-west thoroughfare and as an attractive location for automobile sale and service businesses. Its left-turn restrictions and elevated bridge ramps, which completely passed over Front and First Avenues, complicated and reduced access to Skidmore/Old Town, further isolating it from the rest of downtown and constricting its attractiveness as a retail and office district. A direct result of the rapid rise and popularity of the automobile, the new bridge symbolized the transition of the nineteenth-century village, horse and pedestrian-accommodating street plan towards twentieth-century automobile-centered layouts. Less than forty years earlier, Olin Warner had sculpted the Skidmore Fountain in a

¹²⁶ Munk, *Portland Red Guide*, 99, 101.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 105, 126-127.

¹²⁸ Stewart Holbrook, "The Last of the Wobblies," in *Wildmen, Wobblies and Whistle Punks: Stewart Holbrook's Lowbrow Northwest*, ed. Brian Booth (Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 1992), 295-304.

¹²⁹ Quoted in Hawkins, *Grand Era*, 21.

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diminutive size allowing it to better harmonize with the surrounding two- and three-story structures that were the city's norm. The Burnside Bridge dwarfed not only the fountain, but the buildings themselves, as this characteristically twentieth-century piece of urban infrastructure loomed-over and bypassed half the neighborhood.¹³⁰ Suffering a symbolic indignity, a one-way traffic sign was actually affixed to the fountain itself for a time.

The Burnside Bridge project was just the first of a wave of large-scale public works projects and accompanying building demolitions that significantly altered the physical and economic fabric of the district. Following in succession, four major infrastructure projects further impacted the district. These were: 1) constructing a river seawall and sewer interceptor; 2) widening Front Street, extending bridge approaches and constructing Harbor Drive, necessitating removal of all remaining buildings east of Front Street; 3) removing Harbor Drive in order to create a landscaped waterfront esplanade; and 4) constructing light-rail transit (LRT), which brought about changes to sidewalks and traffic patterns.¹³¹

The construction of a seawall and major sewer interceptor in 1929 along the Willamette River, extending 5,400 feet from NW Glisan Street (three blocks north of the district) to SW Jefferson Street (ten blocks south of the district) helped bring an end to the periodic flooding that had plagued Portland's waterfront areas for nearly 80 years (major dam projects on the Columbia River also reduced flooding). However, the project also necessitated the removal of the by-then decaying wharves of waterfront buildings along the east side of Front Street—structures once central to the district's and the city's economic vitality and civic identity. Marking the end of the period of significance, the completion of the seawall in 1929 physically and symbolically severed the district's connection to the Willamette River. While many of Skidmore/Old Town's businesses would continue to be directed towards wholesale trade and industrial activity, a once fundamentally river-oriented trade district had lost the greater part of its marine infrastructure. In addition, 1929 saw the beginnings of the Great Depression which ushered in a period of stagnation not only in Skidmore/Old Town but throughout the nation.

In 1939, the "Front Street Project" was launched, ultimately resulting in not only a widened Front Street but the six-lane Harbor Drive expressway along the seawall with underpasses at all bridges. Before construction could take place, 79 buildings had to be demolished. The project included a concrete esplanade along the top of the seawall and "a narrow strip of park land" between Front Avenue and Harbor Drive.¹³² This project, completed in 1943, forced the removal of a large percentage of buildings at the easterly edge of the Skidmore/Old Town Historic District—the last of the districts wharves and waterfront tradehouses on the east side of Front were gone forever. Few people at the time would have been able to predict that the expressway itself would be removed thirty years later for another civic undertaking - construction of Waterfront Park - which now defines the easterly edge of the district.

Private property owners were also beginning to raze the district's historic structures, beginning in 1928 with the 1867 Bank of British Columbia, a flat-iron style building adjacent to the Skidmore Fountain inaugurating a nearly three-decade long period of demolition for Portland's neglected cast-iron structures. In most cases, surface parking lots replaced the demolished buildings—many such lots remain today—further evidence of the car's dominance and economic conditions in the district which apparently did not make new construction

¹³⁰ William J. Hawkins, III, "Befriending Your Cast Iron District."

¹³¹ E. Kimbark MacColl, *The Growth of a City: Power and Politics in Portland, Oregon, 1915-1950* (Portland: The Georgian Press, 1979) 315.

¹³² Lansing, *Portland*, 335; MacColl, *Growth of a City*, 529; Allen-McMath-Hawkins Architects, *Development Program, Skidmore Old Town Historic District* (Portland: Prepared for the Portland Development Commission, 1976), 5.

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attractive.

There is evidence that some citizens appreciated the “romantic” qualities of the early commercial district; a 1930 article in the *Oregonian* had stated: “It is not generally known in our city of Portland—by all accounts the oldest and most individual city in the northwest—that we have here, in the morning’s ramble or a leisurely survey from an automobile, a street drenched with pioneer associations which will please the eye and intrigue the memories of old days.”¹³³ But times had changed and there was no organized opposition from voters or civic groups to the demolition activities, although one observer likened the destruction wrought by the Harbor Drive project to the London Blitz.¹³⁴ New auto-accommodating public policies and development were in fact widely supported; even demolitions to create new surface lots were regarded as good economic sense—realtor Chester A. Moores stating in 1939, “If older buildings that are losing money were torn down and new ground areas made available for parking spaces, the remaining office buildings would reap... advantage.”¹³⁵

Beginning in the 1960s, however, preservation advocacy, policy shifts and public and private investment, slowed the demolition trend. Pioneering Portland preservationists, such as George McMath, Bill Hawkins, and Gregg Sutton rallied around Old Town’s historic buildings, raised public awareness, organized a “Friends of Cast Iron” group and succeeded in landmarking key structures and creating a historic district by the mid-1970s. Preservation, renovation and rehabilitation took their place as urban planning and development tools in the district. Early noteworthy restoration and rehabilitation projects, many under the auspices of Bill Naito, that raised the district’s profile and set the stage for future reinvestments, included the Globe Hotel/Import Plaza conversion (1963, #70) and restoration work on the Smith Block/Railway Building (early 1960s and 1978, #96, #78). In the 1980s and early 1990s, a fresh round of rehabilitation and restoration occurred, including the Blagen Block (1983, #71), the George Lawrence Building (1985, #85), the Reed Building (1985, #74), the New Market Theater (1983, #45) and the Oregon & Washington Investment and Trust Co. (1991, #79). More recently, spurred in part by development activities in the nearby Pearl District and in New Chinatown, a new round of major renovations and rehabilitations has been initiated; the Freimann Kitchen Building was restored in 2002 (#89) and other major projects currently underway or recently completed include the Smith Block (#96 and #78), the White Stag Building (#92), the Bickel Block (#91), the Blagen Block (#71) and the Freimann Restaurant Building (#84). While a number of resources have been lost, a cohesive collection of historic structures remains in the Skidmore/Old Town district and ongoing investments in renovation, restoration and rehabilitation promise to preserve the district’s resources for future generations. Together, they remind us not only of a “grand era” of commercial architecture, but of the critical role Portland played as a regional metropolis and the complex spatial and social shifts older Western port cities experienced as they matured.

Architectural Context and Significance

The Skidmore/Old Town Historic District is nationally significant for its exceptional mid-nineteenth to early twentieth-century commercial buildings. Its buildings reflect the evolution and diversity of design ideals and building practices evident in the United States during the period of significance. They present a broad range of commercial architectural styles that lend variety to the district’s urban character while also working in concert to create a cohesive and distinct historic sense of place. The district includes: elaborate, somewhat ethereal Victorian statements like the High Italianate Blagen Block (#71); transitional amalgams such as the Italianate-Sullivan-esque Skidmore Block (#72); solid Richardsonian Romanesque structures such as the Haseltine

¹³³ John Logan, *Oregonian*, September 7, 1930.

¹³⁴ Hawkins, *Grand Era*, 162.

¹³⁵ MacColl, *Growth of a City*, 529.

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Building (#36); and buildings exhibiting the cleaner lines and nascent functionalism of the early twentieth century Commercial and Utilitarian styles, as in the White Stag Building (#92). But the most noteworthy and defining elements of the district's historic character derive from its Victorian Era masonry and cast-iron buildings. This collection is one of the largest and best preserved in the American West. Use of architectural cast iron ranges from sparsely applied ornamental accents to full iron-fronted façades. Most of the cast-iron work is associated with Italianate buildings, but also appears in a few other stylistic modes, for example the Victorian Gothic style Oregon & Washington Trust building (#79). Skidmore/Old Town's cast-iron buildings, from the iconic New Market Theater (#45) and the Merchant Hotel (#12, #28) to less imposing "background" structures like the Portland Mariners' Home (#3) and the Fechheimer and White Building (#98) have long been noted not only for their individual beauty and rich contributions to Portland's built environment, but for their collective importance to the nation's architectural heritage.

Beyond their aesthetic value, the district's commercial buildings collectively express in architectural forms the success of early Portland's trade-centered economy and rise as a major urban center. The application of proto-prefabricated, cast-iron construction methods to the expressive Victorian styles evident in the district's commercial buildings constitutes an important West Coast reflection of nineteenth-century America's "Age of Enterprise." This complex historical era was characterized by: economic expansion and diversification; a spirit of entrepreneurialism, the rise of powerful corporations, managerial innovations and mass production; an increased pace of industrialization; rapid urbanization; and intensified exploitation of natural and human resources. In Portland, as in other cities across the country, the use of cast-iron architectural technology intersected with the adoption and adaptation of the Italianate and other European-influenced architectural styles, together providing industrial-age efficiency while satisfying the desires of building owners, businesses, civic boosters and designers for impressive and urbane downtown buildings and districts. Cast-iron building elements and the Italianate style are important historical markers of an increasingly specialized—and particularly commercial—form of architecture that anchored late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century business and trade districts throughout the country.¹³⁶

The cast-iron era spanned most of the nineteenth century in the United States, beginning slowly in the 1820s, accelerating in the 1850s, and peaking in the 1880s. The development and use of cast-iron building elements was a significant achievement in architecture and technology, coinciding with broad and complex shifts in America's economy, population and national identity away from a rural/agricultural orientation towards one that was increasingly urban and industrial. Cast iron captured the urban imagination in a way that few building materials had in the past, and was embraced by architects, building clients, journalists, and the general public.¹³⁷ Between 1850 and 1890, entire structures composed of modular cast-iron elements were prefabricated in foundries and shipped to building sites in cities and towns throughout the country, creating new urban spaces with a distinctly orderly and "modern" commercial flavor.

The apogee of the cast-iron era, between 1850 and 1890, also coincided with the settlement and development of the Far West and the rise of its first major urban centers, including Portland. This confluence allowed Portland to emerge as a key showcase for the architectural uses of cast iron. In his book *The Grand Era of Cast Iron Architecture in Portland*, William Hawkins notes: "the construction of the first 'Iron Front' in the United States

¹³⁶ Richard Longstreth, *The Buildings of Main Street* (Washington: The Preservation Press, 1987), 13-19; Leland Roth, *American Architecture: A History* (Boulder: Westview Press, 2001), 192, 211.

¹³⁷ Antoinette J. Lee, "Cast Iron in American Architecture: A Synoptic View," in *The Technology of Historic American Buildings: Studies of the Materials, Craft Processes, and the Mechanization of Building Construction*, ed. H. Ward Jandl (Washington: Foundation for Preservation Technology, 1983) 97.

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and the erection of the first house on the site of what was to become Portland took place in the same year – 1842. In the fifty years that followed, approximately 180 of the 200 brick commercial structures erected in Portland are known to have used cast iron structurally or decoratively.”¹³⁸

Although Portland’s cast-iron structures did not always reach the same scale or refinement of those in the largest eastern and Midwest cities, they did create a distinctive cityscape with a high degree of architectural sophistication. Portland’s business core, set alongside the Willamette River and encompassing today’s Skidmore/Old Town Historic District, was lined with rows of cast-iron fronted façades, together establishing a notable architectural unity that flowed from harmoniously arranged columns, arches and fenestration, on both full-block structures and buildings as narrow as 25 feet.¹³⁹

In Portland, use of cast-iron facilitated the adoption of Italianate and other revival styles that were emerging in commercial architecture in more-established cities “Back East.” The Victorian Italianate style and its variants elaborated on earlier Renaissance-influenced revivals with much emphasis put on the treatment of windows—especially through the use of various types of arches—and use of ornament that, in the words of Marcus Whiffen, ranged from “out-and-out naturalism to a stylization of already stylized classical forms.”¹⁴⁰ Characteristic features include masonry bearing walls, bracketed cornices, and use of architectural cast iron and pronounced moldings on the façades. The brick walls were left exposed or covered with stucco. Arched openings and segmentally arched windows on the upper stories and bracketed cornices along the roofline were other defining features of this style. Commonly, windows pierced brick walls, and the pier between the windows was treated as a pilaster or was stuccoed to suggest a wide column. Upper-floor window arches were often capped with iron keystones, and iron decorations were placed at the capitals of the pilasters or in the spandrel panels between the arches.¹⁴¹ Many of these buildings were of loft-type construction—creating flexible space usable for many retail, wholesale, warehouse, and manufacturing uses.

Portlanders’ decisions to use cast iron were pragmatic; prefabricated iron building parts could be erected more quickly than masonry, with fewer workmen and lower costs. The city’s merchant leaders were astute in business matters, many coming from Northeastern states where they would have been attuned to seeking out the newest developments in business practices and technology. From a broader perspective, the new and sophisticated design options expressed through cast iron created a means for the city’s aspiring architects, businessmen and political leaders to proclaim their cultural refinement and economic power, helping them to forge an urban and metropolitan environment that they self-consciously wished to differentiate from the “frontier” settings of the Far West.

The following sections discuss the historical development of architectural cast iron in the United States and Portland. A comparative analysis of selected remaining cast-iron building collections in other cities is also presented to provide a contextual background for understanding the significance of Portland’s Skidmore/Old Town Historic District.

Development of cast iron as an architectural material

¹³⁸ Hawkins, *Grand Era*, 12.

¹³⁹ The extant Fechheimer & White Building (#98) is one such narrow building with six-foot five inch arches, a span used on many larger buildings. These arches were cast in a single piece, a significant technical feat in 1870 (Hawkins, *Grand Era*, 146).

¹⁴⁰ Marcus Whiffen, *American Architecture Since 1780: A Guide to the Styles*, rev. ed. (1969; repr., Cambridge: MIT Press, 1992), 99.

¹⁴¹ Hawkins, *Grand Era*, 20.

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Architectural cast iron was one of the many technological innovations of the Industrial Revolution. Before the eighteenth century, cast iron was scarce and its uses were limited. In the early 1700s, cast iron was used in Britain and Europe for steam engine parts, bridge and rail components, and structural columns. By the late 1700s, Europeans had learned to appreciate the advantages of cast iron over traditional building materials such as wood and stone. It had fireproof qualities, performed well structurally as columns in buildings, and could be molded into shapes that were compatible with evolving architectural styles and structural requirements. But until the mid-eighteenth century, cast iron was too costly to make in large quantities. With the introduction of new furnace technology in England, it became increasingly economical and practical for use in building construction. Slender cast-iron pillars were introduced in English mill buildings as early as the 1790s, replacing flammable timber elements.

While European interest in cast iron as an architectural element began to decline by the 1850s, it was enthusiastically embraced in the United States beginning in the 1820s and accelerating in the 1850s. First prevalent in industrial settings, cast-iron was used in machinery, railroad equipment, and urban water systems and street lighting. Its earliest uses in construction were structural, for example bridge components and bearing columns in large public buildings like theaters. It also allowed for bold advances in architectural designs and new options for rich surface ornamentation. Cast iron's inherent plasticity and the casting process itself allowed easy replication of architectural parts that could be used in different settings—over-and-over again; this marked an important step in the historical trend away from hand-craftsmanship and artisan-based construction towards pre-fabrication, modularity, and standardized design.

By the mid-1820s, one-story, insertable iron storefronts were being sold in New York City, with advertisements emphasizing protection against theft and fire. Through the rest of the century, the iron storefront would become ubiquitous in towns and cities from coast to coast. This cost-effective innovation not only helped support the load of upper floors, but also allowed installation of large glass display windows, bringing natural light into shop interiors and creating new opportunities for product merchandizing and advertising, another aspect of business practice rapidly changing and expanding in this era.

Consistent with the impulse to adapt and innovate evident in nineteenth-century America, there were few implicit design “rules” governing how cast iron should be used, and it came to be applied for purposes well beyond what had been accepted abroad. Architects, businessmen, and foundry operators were encouraged to devise new uses for this adaptable material. In 1840, early promoters claimed it was cheaper, safer, and capable of “greater display of taste;” the new material was touted as a “new architecture” that would diverge from forms dictated by “bulky materials.”¹⁴²

Self-taught architect and engineer James Bogardus made a significant contribution to furthering cast iron use nationally. From 1840 on, he promoted its strength, stability, durability, lightness, affinity for casting in ornate shapes, and fire resistance. He also understood that the foundry casting processes were highly compatible with emerging industrial age-concepts of prefabrication, mass production, and use of identical interchangeable parts. In 1849, Bogardus is credited with erecting the first structure with self-supporting, multistoried exterior walls of iron, a building that was considered to be uniquely American.¹⁴³ The Laing Stores, in Manhattan, was a corner row of small four-story warehouses that looked like one building. It was remarkably completed in just two

¹⁴² Lee, “Cast Iron in America,” 97, 101

¹⁴³ John G. Waite, *Preservation Brief 27: The Maintenance and Repair of Architectural Cast Iron* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1991).

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months. The real innovation of the Laing Stores was two street façades of self-supporting cast iron, consisting of multiples of just a few pieces – Doric style engaged columns, panels, sills, and plates, along with applied ornaments. Each component was cast individually in a foundry and brought by horse cart to the building site, then hoisted into position, bolted together, and fastened with iron spikes and straps to the conventional timber and brick structure.

By the second half of the nineteenth century, economic, urban and territorial growth in the U.S. provided fertile conditions for spreading cast-iron use. Hundreds of iron fronts were erected in commercial and public building projects across the country. Along with exterior uses, many public buildings displayed ornamental and structural interior ironwork. Examples include the Peabody Library in Baltimore and the great dome of the U.S. Capitol, completed during the Civil War. Ornamental cast iron also proved to be a popular landscape material, appearing in fences, fountains, lampposts, furniture, etc. With such widespread demand, many foundries added architectural iron departments.

Cast iron continued to be the architectural metal of choice throughout the second half of the nineteenth century, for both practical and economic reasons. The largest standing example of framing with cast-iron columns (and wrought iron beams, which had greater tensile strength) is Chicago's sixteen-story Manhattan Building, the world's tallest skyscraper when constructed in 1890. By this time, however, steel was becoming available nationally, and because it was structurally more versatile and cost-competitive, it was increasingly favored. Nonetheless, cast iron continued to be used well into the twentieth century for various structural and ornamental purposes, including storefronts, large window frames, street and landscape furnishings, and subway kiosks.

With the advent of better construction materials, changes in architectural styles, and shifts in urban economies and development patterns, iron-front buildings nationwide began to be demolished in the early twentieth century, accelerating after World War II in a rush of downtown redevelopment projects. The area now designated as Portland's Skidmore/Old Town Historic District was no exception. However, a few significant collections do remain in selected cities, as well as more isolated examples, across the country.

Cast-iron architecture in Skidmore/Old Town

During the cast-iron era, Portland's business core, set alongside the Willamette River, was lined with rows of cast-iron fronted façades. These two- to four-story edifices were usually of brick construction, sometimes with wood and iron structural members, and their street faces were defined by decorative cast-iron elements ranging from modest adornments to ornate full-façade treatments. The earliest examples from the 1850s and 1860s, such as the 1857 Hallock and McMillen Building (#99) and the 1859 Delschneider Building (# 90), were smaller and more modest than the commercial palaces that followed in later decades.

The first iron elements used in Portland were obtained from San Francisco, where cast-iron construction had been utilized by the early 1850s (although cast iron was, from a relative standpoint, never as popular in San Francisco as it came to be in Portland). Its several foundries included the California Foundry, Fulton Iron Works, Sutter Iron Works, and the Phoenix Iron Works, which was represented locally by Portland's first architect, Absalom B. Hallock.¹⁴⁴ Hallock designed Portland's first brick commercial structure in 1853 (W. S. Ladd Building, no longer extant), and used the city's first iron pilaster columns on a structure he built for himself in 1857. The Hallock and McMillen Building still stands, although the exterior iron work is gone. The iron used on the exterior of the 1883 Bickel Block (#91) was made by Architectural Iron Works of San

¹⁴⁴ Hawkins, *Grand Era*, 16.

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Francisco, the western branch of the important early architectural iron foundry in New York established by Daniel Badger in 1842.

Beginning in 1864, Portland foundries, including the Willamette Iron Works and Honeyman's City Foundry, began producing cast-iron building elements and by 1867 were able to meet the increasing local demand for iron-fronted structures. The pattern designers for locally produced iron elements are not generally known, but wood carver and artisan John (Hans) Staehli is known to have sculpted the wooden forms for some of them, although it isn't clear which ones. Staehli emigrated from Switzerland to execute architectural details for structures at Johns Hopkins University. He later moved to San Francisco, designing building details for Stanford University, and eventually settled in Portland. He designed and executed a number of public art pieces here, including the Chiming Fountain in Washington Park and the large wooden figures of Atlas and Hermes that adorned the elaborate 1884 Kamm Block (demolished in 1939).¹⁴⁵

The face of the city gained a cosmopolitan air in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Front Street, lined for blocks with solid masonry and cast-iron structures, many exhibiting markedly similar iron patterns, bore little resemblance to the wooden village of the 1850s. The Smith Block of 1872 (# 95, #96) provides a glimpse of how the area must have looked, with row after row of unified façades. Smith Block is particularly noteworthy for displaying a specific cast-iron pattern, introduced in the late 1860s, that was repeated on at least nine other buildings along First and Front Streets, north of Pine. This pattern, which featured fluted Corinthian columns, coffered arches decorated with flower medallions, and spandrel panels with heads intertwined with foliage, was used over approximately 1,000 linear feet of building fronts and created an architectural unity in the district rarely seen in American cities. Such vistas inspired the *Oregonian* to write in 1871, "Many of these buildings are costly and of handsome and imposing appearance. We doubt if any city on the Pacific Coast can show anything like a parallel. The exhibit proves conclusively and in the most appreciable manner the rapid strides of our city toward wealth and greatness." Another remaining example of the rhythmic rows of columns and arches that once united block fronts in early Portland, and reportedly the largest intact cast-iron commercial building still standing on the West Coast, is the one-hundred foot front of the four-story High Italianate Blagen Block (# 71), designed in 1888 by noted architect Warren Williams.¹⁴⁶

In the 1880s, the growing city filled in the blocks between the Willamette River and Fourth Street until cast-iron columns lined almost every block. Notable buildings of the 1880s still standing in Portland include the 1880 Merchant Hotel (# 12, #28) and the 1888 Blagen Block (#71). The last structure in the City to use cast-iron pilasters and columns was the 1889 Glisan Building (# 48). Its decorations echoed the Modern Gothic style, with the addition of Art Nouveau elements. With this building, the cast-iron era in Portland came to a close.

Buildings from the late nineteenth and early twentieth century in the Richardsonian Romanesque and Commercial styles added a complementary layer to the district's rich architectural character. The Richardsonian Romanesque style began to replace the Italianate style beginning in the late 1880s, introducing an aesthetic that developed on the East Coast and was more suited to the era's increasingly tall structures. Walls were characterized by heavy brick and stone work rather than the more airy cast iron. The Art Nouveau style introduced decorative elements that looked more organic than applied. Examples of this new construction alongside existing cast-iron buildings include the Richardsonian Romanesque style New Market Annex of 1889 (# 46).

¹⁴⁵ Louise Aaron, "This Was Portland," *Oregon Journal*, September 16, 1956, 6A.

¹⁴⁶ Hawkins, *Grand Era*, 152.

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These compatible structures contribute to the historical and architectural significance of the district, but its earlier, primarily Italianate cast-iron buildings are what most distinguish it from other urban historic districts in the West. For instance, the Pioneer Square–Skid Road Historic District in Seattle, the city that would eventually surpass Portland as a “metropolis of the Pacific Northwest,” consists almost exclusively of buildings constructed after the fire of 1889, which destroyed most of that city’s much smaller collection of cast-iron structures. In San Francisco, despite its greater size and wealth, cast iron was comparatively less common than in Portland. Wooden construction predominated during the cast-iron era, a major factor in the catastrophic fire that followed the 1906 earthquake and consumed much of the city and many of its cast-iron buildings. A handful of cast-iron fronted buildings remain in the Jackson Square Historic District.¹⁴⁷

Finally, the Skidmore/Old Town Historic District is significant for its collection of important examples of the work of several of Oregon’s most distinguished nineteenth-century architects, including: Justus Krumbein (Bickel Block, 1883); Warren H. Williams (Blagen Block, 1888); Piper & Burton (New Market Theater, 1872); McCaw & Martin (New Market Annex, 1889); and Whidden & Lewis (Reed Building, 1890). The Skidmore Fountain, Portland’s oldest piece of public art and the historic district’s namesake, was completed in 1888 by New York sculptor Olin J. Warner and J. M. Wells, supervising architect.

Cast-iron manufacturing in the Portland area

Understanding the role of Portland cast-iron foundries and Oregon iron works¹⁴⁸ in the development of Skidmore/Old Town is helpful in evaluating its architectural and historical significance. Portland architect and cast-iron scholar William Hawkins, whose work informed this section, asserts that “the iron industry in Oregon was in every way analogous to the early growth and development of the state.”¹⁴⁹ The first iron smelted from raw ore on the Pacific Coast was produced in 1862 or 1863, when Dr. Aaron Knight Olds poured pig iron from a small blast furnace he constructed at Moores’s Mill on the Tualatin River, 12 miles south of Portland. Olds had come to Oregon in 1852, after erecting iron works in Michigan and helping to found what would become the great iron industry of the Lake Superior region. Although reportedly making “a superior article,” his Oregon iron works did not last long or produce large quantities of iron.¹⁵⁰ The state’s first iron foundry had been constructed next to the Clackamas River, near Oregon City in 1848, by English pioneer James Morfitt, who had moved west from Chicago after helping to build that city’s first iron foundry. A somewhat primitive

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 14; Karin Murr Link, “Pioneer Square—Skid Road Historic District,” National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 2006); Karen Gordon, Seattle Historic Preservation Officer, e-mail message to author, “Re: Seattle cast-iron,” March 23, 2006; N. Moses Corrette, City and County of San Francisco, e-mail message to author, “Re: Architectural cast-iron,” May 31, 2006.

¹⁴⁸ Terms describing iron industry plants, equipment and products are sometimes used imprecisely in both early and recent sources. Use of related terms in this nomination are based on the following general definitions: *foundry*, an establishment where raw iron is poured into molds to make finished castings (e.g. architectural columns or machine parts); *iron works*, an establishment where iron ore is smelted in a blast furnace, producing metallic iron through a chemical reduction process (most often using coke or charcoal) and separation of impurities as slag. The term “iron works” was also occasionally applied to iron foundries and *forges* (establishments for making wrought iron products); *pig iron*, rough bars of crude iron poured from a blast furnace into sand molds, an intermediary product used later to make finished products of cast iron, wrought iron or steel; *cast iron*, a strong but brittle iron derived from melting and further processing pig iron, and then casting it into molds to create finished products in a foundry.

¹⁴⁹ Hawkins, *Grand Era*, 188.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 189; “Obituary of Aaron Knight Olds,” ca. July 1896, unidentified Yamhill County newspaper, transcribed, <http://genforum.genealogy.com/olds/messages/437.html>.

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enterprise, it used iron from Canada and California to produce the first iron castings in the state. The first foundry in Portland began operation five years later.

Portland's earliest foundries produced primarily industrial and agricultural tools, machines and parts. The architectural iron for Portland's cast-iron buildings of the 1850s and early 1860s was not supplied locally; most of it was imported from San Francisco foundries in finished form. After the mid-1860s, the majority of iron fronts used in Portland were made by local foundries, at first using imported raw iron but soon relying on pig iron produced by the Oregon Iron Company and its successors, the Oswego Iron Company and the Oregon Iron and Steel Company, in the nearby town of Oswego. The Oswego iron works, financed by William Ladd, Simeon Reed and Henry Villard, operated from 1867 to 1894, smelting brown hematite or "limonite" ore from two nearby mines in charcoal-fueled blast furnaces. In its peak year of 1890, the Oregon Iron and Steel Company was the largest manufacturing operation in the state, employing 325 workers, producing 12,305 tons of pig iron, and supplying foundries throughout the Pacific Northwest and California, including 33 in Portland.¹⁵¹ Six Portland foundries played a prominent role in casting parts for iron-fronted buildings in Portland and Skidmore/Old Town.

The first of these foundries, the **Portland Foundry**, was established in 1853 on Front Street, near Morrison by Captain James Turnbull, H. W. Davis and David Monastes. Their pattern maker was Peter Taylor. The firm produced iron castings for agricultural and industrial use. In 1864 it began to produce the first architectural castings for commercial buildings in Portland. The Oregonian proudly noted, "this is the first work of the kind ever done in Oregon, and an examination of some of the castings already discloses the fact that they are of the first quality."¹⁵² The foundry remained in its original location on Front Street until 1867, when it moved to Second Street between Morrison and Alder. It remained in business until the great fire of 1873.

Oregon Iron Works was established in 1863 by A. C. Gibbs, Governor of Oregon between 1862 and 1866. The business was located in Skidmore/Old Town Historic District's 1859 Delschneider Building at 71 SW Oak Street (#90). Although Oregon Iron Works leased the building, cast-iron thresholds bearing the OIW mark were installed and these are still evident. The foundry relocated a couple of times, finally purchasing property at SW Front and Harrison Street. The property and some equipment were sold in 1873 to Smith Brothers' Iron Works, and the company attempted unsuccessfully to reorganize.

The third iron works established in the city was the **Willamette Iron Works**. It was incorporated in 1865. The city's first architect, A. B. Hallock, who had earlier brought to Portland architectural iron from San Francisco's Phoenix Iron Works, was among the first officers and stockholders. (Hallock is significant in Portland's history and in the development of Skidmore/Old Town for having constructed the earliest surviving building in downtown Portland, the 1857 Hallock and McMillen Building at 237 SW Front Avenue (#99). Willamette Iron Works was located on the levee below Davis Street. An 1866 advertisement proudly claimed that it manufactured "Building Fronts and castings of every description," with the "largest stock of patterns North of San Francisco." In 1869, the Portland Directory stated that "the Willamette Iron Works have turned out many large and elegant castings and machines which are equal in workmanship to any similar establishments in any country."¹⁵³ The company was quite prosperous. In 1882 it employed 80 men and produced iron worth \$200,000. At the turn of the century, the business became Willamette Iron and Steel Works and turned its focus

¹⁵¹ Susanna Campbell Kuo, Oswego Heritage Council, "A Brief History of the Oregon Iron Industry," <http://www.oswegoheritage.org/history.html>.

¹⁵² Hawkins, *Grand Era*, 189.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 191.

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to marine work.

In its earlier years, Willamette Iron Works produced cast iron for a large number of Portland buildings, including three that still exist in Skidmore/Old Town: the 1880 Merchant Hotel (#12, 28), the 1885 Fechheimer & White Building (#98), and the 1886 Failing Building (#67). It is likely that the company also supplied the 1888 Blagen Block (# 71). All are designated local landmarks in the district. Willamette Iron Works also produced material for the famed 1868 Ladd & Tilton Bank. Although demolished in 1954, the elaborate cast-iron façade was salvaged, and the parts were incorporated in 1967 into the rebuilt 1869 Ladd & Bush Bank, a nearly identical building in Salem, Oregon. The reassembled façades measure 165 feet and 102 feet, respectively, reportedly making it the largest cast-iron fronted structure on the West Coast, albeit not in its original state.

Smith Brothers Iron Works was established circa 1865 by Ferdinand and Charles Smith and began operation on First Street, near Salmon. They moved twice, finally locating at Front and Hall streets. In 1883 the name was changed to Smith & Watson Iron Works, and the firm operated until about 1890. By 1882 the firm was one of the largest in the city with ninety employees, however, there are few records of its work. It is known to have manufactured the iron work for the Canal and Lock Company of Oregon City which the City Directory noted was never surpassed as “superior iron work on the Pacific Coast.”¹⁵⁴ The perimeter iron rail around the National Historic Landmark Pioneer Courthouse (1875) has been attributed to this foundry.

The **City Foundry and Machine Shop** opened for business in 1871 at the corner of Front and Columbia streets. It was founded by Scotsman John Honeyman, a mechanical engineer and machinist, and his three sons. At peak times the foundry employed as many as 65 men. The business lasted until the death of John Honeyman in 1898. The Sinnott House (#6) at the northwest corner of Third and Couch features cast-iron pilasters on the first floor, most likely supplied by the City Foundry, since they are identical to identified cast-iron work on the Mikado Block in the nearby Yamhill Historic District. The iron-fronted Cully Building, located across the Willamette River in the former downtown of East Portland, still bears the company mark.

The **Union Iron Works** was the last known company to have produced iron fronts for Portland buildings. It was begun by Angus Campbell in 1879 and located on the southeast corner of Front and Main streets. By 1882, the business employed eighteen men. It was incorporated in 1885. The company produced its first iron front for the 1880 Harker Building, still standing in the Yamhill Historic District at 824 SW First Avenue.

Portland and Skidmore/Old Town cast-iron buildings in perspective

In her essay “Cast Iron in American Architecture: A Synoptic View,” Antoinette J. Lee defines a cast-iron building as “primarily a commercial structure with at least one story of cast-iron components in the façade – in other words, a façade which is defined more by cast iron components than by brick, stone, or timber.”¹⁵⁵ By this definition, thousands of cast-iron buildings were constructed in American cities and towns. Extant examples may be found in the majority of cities that experienced commercial growth during the cast-iron era, including Baltimore, New Orleans, Philadelphia, St. Louis, New York City and others in the eastern, southern and midwestern states, and Portland, San Francisco, Seattle and smaller cities in the West. Unfortunately, natural disasters and redevelopment have wiped out many of the larger concentrations in intervening decades.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 191.

¹⁵⁵ Lee, “Cast Iron in American Architecture,” 99.

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At one time Portland had approximately 180 cast-iron structures. The city's surviving collection is currently tallied by William Hawkins at 68 buildings that feature prominent decorative, structural, and/or re-built cast-iron.¹⁵⁶ Twenty of these buildings are located in the Skidmore-Old Town Historic District. They vary in height from two to four stories and were originally designed for commercial uses ranging from manufactories and warehouses to hotels, offices and stores. They are generally defined by: 1) a first-story façade featuring major cast-iron features, including pilasters and columns and/or bolted storefront components (sometimes structurally integrated with wood framing or supporting upper level masonry walls); and 2) upper stories with varying applications of attached cast-iron design features and ornament, often including window arches. Some feature interior iron elements, including structural columns and post connections.

As a group or collection, Portland's cast-iron buildings merit comparison with that of other cities.¹⁵⁷ No comprehensive national study of cast-iron architecture has been identified. However, there are several cities in addition to Portland, that still have a number of buildings identified by cast-iron elements. In order to place Portland in a national context, the cast iron collections of a few such cities are briefly described below.¹⁵⁸

Baltimore, Maryland

Baltimore currently has 23 cast-iron buildings. Since 1991, four cast-iron structures have been demolished and one was reconstructed as a museum façade.¹⁵⁹ As was typical in many larger American cities with sizable numbers of cast-iron buildings, many of Baltimore's structures are five to six stories tall. Their original use was mainly as commercial structures and warehouses.¹⁶⁰ Current uses run the gamut from restaurants and galleries to offices, apartments, and housing for the homeless. Perhaps most noteworthy is the Sun Iron Building. With "two full iron façades and an internal support system of cast-iron columns and beams," it was the first large-scale commercial use of the all-iron construction method developed by James Bogardus, considered the inventor of the cast-iron front.¹⁶¹

Louisville, Kentucky

Approximately 95 buildings with some cast iron on the primary façade, including several buildings with façades constructed entirely of cast-iron, grace Louisville's West Main Street Preservation District. Most of these structures are three to four stories tall, and a few are six stories. Their original uses were as warehouses,

¹⁵⁶ Hawkins, *Grand Era*, 12. Hawkins' criteria includes recent restorations, hidden cast-iron decoration, and surviving buildings which once sported such decoration and to which original or replica cast-iron decoration could be replaced. See also City of Portland, *Historic Resources Inventory*, 1984.

¹⁵⁷ So palpable is Portland's cast-iron tradition that some have indicated it compares only to the much larger collection in New York's SoHo Cast-Iron Historic District (NHL, 1978) in size. See Hawkins, *Grand Era*, 14; Margot Gayle, *Cast Iron Architecture in New York: A Photographic Survey* (New York: Dover Publications, 1974) xiv; *Louisville Landmarks Commission Design Guidelines, West Main Street Preservation District* (Louisville: Louisville Landmarks Commission, n.d.), 1. Maintained largely in the mid-1970s, these assertions were made when few if any cities, excluding New York and Portland, had undertaken surveys of their surviving cast-iron structures. Imprecise use of terms within the architectural history and preservation communities, and the lack of a comprehensive national survey of cast iron architecture, continues to make inter-city comparative analysis difficult.

¹⁵⁸ Cities identified based on correspondence with selected SHPOs and other preservation organizations; the National Register of Historic Places "research" web site: <http://www.nps.gov/nr/research/> and other online sources; and a review of available secondary literature.

¹⁵⁹ James D. Dilts and Catharine F. Black, eds., *Baltimore's Cast-Iron Buildings and Architectural Ironwork* (Centerville, MD: Tidewater Publishers, 1991).

¹⁶⁰ "Cast Iron Architecture of Baltimore, Maryland, 1850-1904," National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1994).

¹⁶¹ James D. Dilts, "Introduction," in *Baltimore's Cast-Iron Buildings and Architectural Ironwork*, ed. James D. Dilts and Catharine F. Black (Centerville, MD: Tidewater Publishers, 1991), 7.

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distilleries, saddle and harness makers, and outfitters for Ohio River journeys. Today, these buildings house a mix of offices, galleries, cultural centers, and retail uses. Overall, the West Main Street District's cast-iron buildings are considered to be in "excellent" condition. In addition, Louisville has many cast-iron commercial storefronts with commercial uses above.¹⁶²

New York City, New York

Of the nearly 500 buildings within the boundaries of New York's SoHo Cast-Iron Historic District (NHL, 1978), some 139 are iron-fronted.¹⁶³ In addition, estimates list the greater Manhattan area's total between 250 and 300. Generally taller than Portland's examples many of New York's cast-iron buildings range from four to six stories. Many of the buildings bear the mark of important architects and designers. There are a few taller buildings in the group, consisting mainly of late cast-iron examples, buildings that had stories added, and buildings with rudimentary iron framing anticipating twentieth-century steel skyscrapers.¹⁶⁴ The SoHo collection is arguably the nation's largest cast-iron ensemble.

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Unofficial counts estimate Philadelphia's number of buildings with cast-iron façades between 150 and 200. These structures include both storefronts and entire façades, and they are generally located within the Old City Historic District -- touted as "one of the country's greatest collection of cast-iron and industrial loft buildings." Most of the structures were built between 1850 and 1890 and almost all are four to five stories tall. Originally serving as industrial buildings with storefronts on the first floor and storage or manufacturing in the upper floors, most have been converted into residential units on the upper floors. Many of these buildings are the work of significant builders and designers.¹⁶⁵

San Francisco, California

Despite its early development and urban supremacy on the West Coast, San Francisco has surprisingly little cast-iron architecture. Although a large number of cast iron-fronted buildings were built, some as high as six stories, wood and masonry construction methods predominated in the city during the mid- to late 1800s, and most of the cast-iron buildings that were constructed perished in the earthquake and fire of 1906. There are an estimated dozen cast-iron façades in the city primarily in the Jackson Square Historic District, and a larger number of buildings with more limited exterior applications.¹⁶⁶

Seattle, Washington

There is no official count of Seattle's cast-iron buildings. However, the May 2006 draft updated National Register nomination for the Pioneer Square-Skid Road Historic District indicates there are roughly 20 buildings that feature some exterior cast iron, but the majority of these are not defined by cast-iron façades or major ornamentation, many containing just simple iron structural columns. None of them ante-date the city's major 1889 fire that wiped out much of its primarily wooden building stock and much smaller collection of Victorian

¹⁶² Joanne Weeter, Louisville Metro Historic Preservation Officer, e-mail message to author: "Re: Louisville cast iron," March 23, 2006. See also: *Louisville Landmarks Commission Design Guidelines, West Main Street Preservation District*.

¹⁶³ John G. Waite, AIA, and Margot Gayle, *Preservation Brief 27: The Maintenance and Repair of Architectural Cast Iron* - Technical Preservation Services (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1991), <http://www.nps.gov/hps/tps/briefs/brief27.htm>; "SoHo Cast-Iron Historic District," National Register of Historic Places Inventory Form (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1974).

¹⁶⁴ Gayle, *Cast Iron Architecture in New York*, iv.

¹⁶⁵ Laura Spina, Philadelphia City Planning Commission, e-mail message to author, "Re: Philadelphia cast iron," March 23, 2006; *The Old City Historic District: A Guide for Property Owners* (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Historical Commission, ca.1995).

¹⁶⁶ N. Moses Corrette, City and County of San Francisco, e-mail message to author, "Re: Architectural cast-iron," May 31, 2006.

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cast-iron buildings. Like Portland's collection, Seattle's buildings originally housed a variety of commercial uses, including hotels, manufacturers, and financiers. Today, many are used as restaurants and retail establishments.¹⁶⁷

St. Louis, Missouri

St. Louis once had one of the largest collections of multi-story cast-iron fronted buildings in the country. As in so many cities, the vast majority have been demolished, many lost when 39 city blocks were cleared in 1939-1941 for construction of the Gateway Arch. Two six-story cast-iron fronted buildings remain in the central city, but the fine large commercial structures of the original central business district and riverfront are lost.

However, perhaps as many as one-thousand complete or partial cast-iron storefronts remain scattered about the city's neighborhoods and on short commercial strips, indicating that St. Louis has perhaps the most extensive if not concentrated collections of single-story cast-iron storefronts in the nation. The St. Louis Building Arts Foundation possesses a large collection of salvaged architectural cast iron, including 135 storefronts, a seven-story façade, and numerous cast-iron building elements.¹⁶⁸

In summary, preliminary research suggests that New York's SoHo Cast Iron Historic District has the largest concentrated collection of multi-story cast-iron buildings, followed by Philadelphia. Louisville and Baltimore also retain impressive collections of multi-storied cast-iron buildings. St. Louis most likely has largest number of single-story storefronts but they are scattered and very few larger buildings defined by cast-iron façades remain. It appears that Portland can lay claim to significant, if not primary standing on the West Coast in terms of the number of surviving structures depending on how the term "cast-iron building" is defined. The Skidmore Old/Town Historic District collection is clearly of national significance when viewed as a cohesive concentration of cast-iron buildings. A comprehensive inventory and comparative analysis of the nation's cast-iron architectural heritage is overdue.

Designation History and Updated Documentation of a National Historic Landmark

The following is a brief summary of Skidmore/Old Town's historic designation history, including information about the intent and findings of this major update of its National Historic Landmark nomination.

Efforts to officially recognize and institute protections for Portland's "Old Town" go back to at least 1962, when a 15-block "Design Zone" for the Skidmore Fountain area (sometimes referred to as the "Fountain Village" area) was established by City ordinance. With the passage of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, public appreciation of preservation values was heightened nationally and locally. Spurred, in part, by the "overnight" demolition of the Ladd Block at SW Second and Columbia in 1966, concerned Portland citizens, including architects and preservationists such as George McMath, William J. Hawkins, III, Gene Westberg, Andy Rocchia and Al Staehli (grandson of sculptor and cast-iron form designer John Staehli), initiated a concerted effort to raise awareness of the city's architectural heritage, leading to the creation of Portland's first preservation ordinance in 1968. It established the Portland Historic Landmarks Commission, a local landmark designation process, and preservation zoning protections. As its first official project, the newly formed Landmarks Commission inventoried structures of potential significance and in October 1969, chose thirteen buildings in the area around the Skidmore Fountain as its first submission to the City Council for consideration as "Historical Landmarks." The Council accepted the recommendation and the thirteen properties were adopted

¹⁶⁷ Link, "Pioneer Square—Skid Road Historic District."; Karen Gordon, Seattle Historic Preservation Officer, e-mail message to author, "Re: Seattle cast-iron," March 23, 2006.

¹⁶⁸ Larry Giles, St. Louis Building Arts Foundation, e-mail messages "Re: St Louis Cast Iron," June 15-16, 2006.

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as Portland's first designated local landmarks on December 3, 1969.¹⁶⁹ Recognizing the significance of the area's resources as a cohesive ensemble of historic masonry and cast-iron commercial buildings, the City Council created the 20-block Skidmore/Old Town Historic District on September 11, 1975, which, together with the concurrently created Yamhill Historic District, became the city's first.¹⁷⁰

Interest in Skidmore/Old Town at the state and federal level was also high. On December 6, 1975, the district was nominated to the National Register of Historic Places, becoming Portland's first district so recognized. The nomination prepared by Greg Olsen and Robert Sutton cited the significance of both its historical associations with the city's early growth and commercial activity and its outstanding architectural values, expressed particularly in its late nineteenth-century brick and cast-iron structures.¹⁷¹ On May 5, 1977, the district was elevated to National Historic Landmark status.¹⁷² No major new documentation of the district's resources or significance appears to have been prepared at that time. The 1977 National Historic Landmark nomination is a slightly revised version of the 1975 National Register nomination.

Although the 1975 and 1977 nominations were prepared consistent with the standards of the time, a number of shortcomings, stemming primarily from their brevity, have been identified. A lack of detail has made it difficult to develop and apply preservation protections, such as district-specific design guidelines, as well as educational and interpretive material. After consulting with the Oregon State Historic Preservation Office and the National Park Service, the Portland Bureau of Planning agreed to update the nomination following current standards for National Historic Landmark documentation. Overall, the intent of this updated documentation is to broadly reexamine the district's physical, architectural and historical contexts, expand and update documentation of its individual properties, and provide additional historical and architectural analysis. This nomination form and its supporting appendices are the result of that effort. They will supersede the 1975 and 1977 nominations as the principal National Historic Landmarks Survey and National Register of Historic Places documentation of the Skidmore/Old Town Historic District's physical characteristics and historical and architectural significance.

This update further develops the historical and architectural descriptions and themes included in the 1975 and 1977 nominations—clarifying, expanding upon, and in some cases correcting, their component parts. For instance, the period of historical significance was evaluated and established as beginning in 1857, with the construction of the earliest extant structure, and ending in 1929, with the construction of the Willamette River seawall.¹⁷³ In addition, as a result of new research and fieldwork and the application of current evaluation standards, the contributing/non-contributing status of a few of the properties has been changed, correcting errors, conforming to the period of significance, and reflecting alterations and rehabilitation of structures since 1975.

While falling outside the period of significance and National Historic Landmark Themes of this nomination, the ongoing story of preservation and rehabilitation efforts in Skidmore/Old Town adds an important layer to the

¹⁶⁹ City of Portland Ordinance No. 139148.

¹⁷⁰ City of Portland Ordinances Nos. 140311 and 140593.

¹⁷¹ Greg Olsen and Robert Sutton, "Skidmore/Old Town Historic District," National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form, (Washington, DC U.S. Department of the Interior, 1975).

¹⁷² Elizabeth Potter, "Portland Skidmore/Old Town Historic District National Landmark Dedication, May 12, 1979," Dedication speech, Oregon State Historic Preservation Office files, May 16, 1979.

¹⁷³ The 1975 National Register nomination indicates 1872-1930 in the space for "Specific Dates" in Section 8; no dates are specified on the 1977 National Historic Landmark nomination form.

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district's overall significance. This history nicely encapsulates the broader story of the ebb and flow of neglect, demolition, renovation and conservation in historic city centers, as well as the trajectory of the preservation movement in Portland. This might be further explored and documented through a future amendment to this nomination, under the National Historic Landmark theme "Expressing Cultural Values" and the "Conservation" area of significance.

CONCLUSION

Beginning in 1857 with the erection of the brick and cast-iron Hallock and McMillen Building, the earliest surviving structure in the Skidmore/Old Town Historic District and one of the oldest in the city, and extending over the next three decades, Portland solidified its position as the primary urban center of the Northwest. Built on the foundation of its trade-centered economy, Skidmore/Old Town as a part of the city's commercial core along and near the Willamette River highway, was central to this role.

Portland's pioneer merchant-entrepreneurs, speculating and capitalizing on the city's strategic location at the head of ocean-going navigation on the Willamette River and its connection to the greater Columbia River system, transformed it from a stump-strewn clearing to the cultural, financial, trade and transportation hub of the Pacific Northwest—second only to San Francisco as a "metropolis" of the Far West. Its mercantile houses, commission agents, steamship companies and financial institutions, clustered along Front and First streets in and near the present Skidmore/Old Town Historic District, supplied the goods, services and trade connections that not only supported the development of western Oregon, but that of the greater Pacific Slope region. Skidmore/Old Town's historic commercial buildings memorialize Portland's position as a commercial entrepôt that linked a large dependant hinterland to national and global economic systems, and highlight the sometimes under-emphasized role of key urban centers in facilitating the settlement and development of the western United States.

The Skidmore/Old Town Historic District is also significant for the exceptional architectural values of its mid- and late-nineteenth-century cast-iron commercial buildings—one of the finest collections in the nation and perhaps the most outstanding in the Far West. These two- to four-story primarily Italianate structures work in concert with sympathetically scaled and designed late nineteenth-century Richardsonian Romanesque and early twentieth-century buildings to define its rich urban character. With elaborate decorative elements echoing Italian Renaissance designs, Skidmore/Old Town's "Commercial Palaces" notably contribute to Portland's architectural distinctiveness and collectively reflect both the economic success of its early businesses, and the high cultural aspirations of its citizens and leaders.

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Tables**Table 1: Population of Selected Western Cities**

City	1850	1860	1870	1880	1890	1900	1910	1920
<i>Pacific Northwest</i>								
Boise	—	1,658*	995	1,899	2,311	5,957	17,358	21,393
Portland	821	2,874	8,293	17,577	46,385	90,426	207,214	258,288
Seattle	—	150**	1,107	3,553	42,837	80,871	237,174	315,312
Spokane	—	—	29**	350**	19,922	36,848	104,402	104,437
Tacoma	—	—	73**	1,098	36,006	37,714	83,743	96,965
Vancouver BC [†]	—	—	—	400	13,709	26,133	95,235	117,217
Victoria BC [†]	—	2,350	3,630	7,295	17,998	20,919	31,660	38,727
Walla Walla	—	722	1,394	3,588	4,709	10,049	19,364	15,503
<i>California</i>								
Los Angeles	1,610	4,385	5,728	11,183	50,395	102,479	319,198	576,673
Oakland	—	1,543	10,500	34,555	48,682	66,960	150,174	216,261
Sacramento	6,820	13,785	16,283	21,420	26,386	29,282	44,696	65,908
San Francisco	34,870	56,802	149,473	233,959	298,997	342,782	416,912	506,676
<i>Interior West</i>								
Denver	—	4,749	4,759	35,629	106,713	133,859	213,381	256,491
Salt Lake City	6,157 ^{††}	8,236	12,854	20,768	44,843	53,531	92,777	118,110

Where no figure is provided, data is not readily available or population is zero.

*Figure is for 1864.

**Approximate

[†]Vancouver and Victoria figures are for 1861, 1871, 1881, etc., except for 1880 figure for Vancouver which is approximate population in 1885.

^{††}Figure is for Salt Lake County, 1850 Census does not include data below the County level for Utah.

Sources: U.S. Census; Carlos Schwantes, *The Pacific Northwest*; www.usa.worldweb.com; www.abag.ca.gov; www.nps.gov; www.vihistory.ca; www.statcan.ca; history.mala.bc.ca; www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca; www.rootsweb.com/~canbc.

Table 2: Population Change of Selected Western Cities

City	1880-1890		1890-1900		1900-1910		1910-1920	
	Number	%Δ	Number	% Δ	Number	% Δ	Number	% Δ
Portland	28,808	164%	44,041	95%	116,788	129%	51,074	25%
Seattle	39,284	1106%	38,034	89%	156,303	193%	78,138	33%
San Francisco	65,038	28%	43,785	15%	74,130	22%	89,764	22%

Source: U.S. Census.

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Table 3: Value of Domestic & Foreign Exports from Portland

Year	Foreign Exports	% of All Exports	Domestic Exports	% of All Exports	All Exports
1870-71	\$531,000	—	—	—	—
1871-72	\$573,000	—	—	—	—
1872-73	\$929,000	—	—	—	—
1873-74	\$1,949,000	—	—	—	—
1874-75	\$1,673,000	—	—	—	—
1875-76	\$2,487,000	—	—	—	—
1876-77	\$2,527,000	—	—	—	—
1877-78	\$3,975,000	—	—	—	—
1878-79	\$3,105,000	—	—	—	—
1879-80	\$4,097,000	—	—	—	—
1880-81	\$3,083,000	—	—	—	—
1881-82	\$6,486,000	52.4%	\$5,900,000	47.6%	\$12,386,000
1882-83	\$3,655,000	36.4%	\$6,383,000	63.6%	\$10,038,000
1883-84	\$4,383,000	42.2%	\$6,014,000	57.8%	\$10,397,000
1884-85	\$4,142,000	38.2%	\$6,700,000	61.8%	\$10,842,000
1885-86	\$5,737,000	37.7%	\$9,481,000	62.3%	\$15,218,000
1886-87	\$5,135,000	35.1%	\$9,508,000	64.9%	\$14,643,000
1887-88	\$4,619,000	34.5%	\$8,788,000	65.5%	\$13,407,000
1888-89	\$4,859,000	35.7%	\$8,763,000	64.3%	\$13,622,000
1889-90	\$3,371,000	—	—	—	—

Where no figure is provided, comparable data is not readily available.

Source: Paul G. Merriam, *Portland, Oregon, 1840-1890: A Social and Economic History* (PhD diss., University of Oregon, 1971).

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Table 4: Value of Foreign Wheat & Flour Exports from Portland

Year	All Foreign Exports	Foreign Wheat & Flour Exports	% of Foreign Exports
1870-71	\$531,000	\$457,000	86.1%
1871-72	\$573,000	\$500,000	87.3%
1872-73	\$929,000	\$888,000	95.6%
1873-74	\$1,949,000	\$1,855,000	95.2%
1874-75	\$1,673,000	\$1,614,000	96.5%
1875-76	\$2,487,000	\$2,348,000	94.4%
1876-77	\$2,527,000	\$2,463,000	97.5%
1877-78	\$3,975,000	\$3,651,000	91.8%
1878-79	\$3,105,000	\$2,937,000	94.6%
1879-80	\$4,097,000	\$4,034,000	98.5%
1880-81	\$3,083,000	\$3,009,000	97.6%
1881-82	\$6,486,000	\$6,413,000	98.9%
1882-83	\$3,655,000	\$3,623,000	99.1%
1883-84	\$4,383,000	\$4,372,000	99.7%
1884-85	\$4,142,000	\$4,041,000	97.6%
1885-86	\$5,737,000	\$5,716,000	99.6%
1886-87	\$5,135,000	\$5,096,000	99.2%
1887-88	\$4,619,000	\$4,598,000	99.5%
1888-89	\$4,859,000	\$4,815,000	99.1%
1889-90	\$3,371,000	\$3,262,000	96.8%

Source: Paul G. Merriam, *Portland, Oregon, 1840-1890: A Social and Economic History* (PhD diss., University of Oregon, 1971).

Table 5: Volume of Wheat & Flour Shipped in 1910, by Port Region

Port Region	Wheat (Bushels)	% of Total	Flour (Barrels)*	% of Total
Columbia River	6,339,972	41.9%	556,113	27.9%
Puget Sound	8,787,752	58.1%	1,439,398	72.1%
Total	15,127,724	100 %	1,995,511	100.0%

* Because each barrel of flour represents about 4.5 bushels of grain, the equivalent total product shipped from Puget Sound was almost double that of the Columbia.

Source: D. W. Meinig, *The Great Columbia Plain: A Historical Geography, 1805-1910* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1995).

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Table 6: Portland & Oregon Foreign-Born Population, 1850-1910

Year	Portland			Oregon	
	Number	As % of Port.	As % of OR F-B	Number	As % of OR
1850	51	6.2%	4.4%	1,022	8.7%
1860	728	25.3%	14.2%	5,123	9.8%
1870	2,578	31.1%	22.2%	11,600	12.8%
1880	6,312	35.9%	20.7%	30,563	17.5%
1890	17,323	37.3%	30.2%	57,317	18.3%
1900	25,876	28.6%	20.7%	65,749	15.9%
1910	50,312	24.3%	30.2%	113,136	16.8%

Source: Paul G. Merriam, "The 'Other Portland:' A Statistical Note on the Foreign-Born," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 80, no. 3 (Fall 1979); U.S. Census.

Table 7: Portland Foreign-Born Population, by Selected Nation of Birth, 1890

Nation	Number	% of Pop.	% of F-B
China	4,438	9.6%	25.6%
Germany	3,652	7.9%	21.1%
Great Britain	2,065	4.5%	11.9%
Ireland	1,638	3.5%	9.5%
Sweden	1,312	2.8%	7.6%
Canada	1,238	2.7%	7.1%
Norway	704	1.5%	4.1%
Russia	359	0.8%	2.1%
Switzerland	403	0.9%	2.3%
France	305	0.7%	1.8%
Denmark	300	0.6%	1.7%
Italy	267	0.6%	1.5%
Other Nations	642	1.4%	3.7%
Total Foreign	17,323	37.3%	100.0%
Native-born	29,062	62.7%	—
For. Parentage*	26,992	58.2%	—

* Persons with one or both parents foreign-born.

Source: U.S. Census; Paul G. Merriam, *Portland, Oregon, 1840-1890: A Social and Economic History* (PhD diss., University of Oregon, 1971).

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Table 8: Percent of Foreign-Born Population of Selected Western Cities, 1890

City	% F-B
San Francisco CA	42.4%
San Jose CA	37.7%
Portland OR	37.4%
Seattle WA	31.9%
Oakland CA	29.9%
Salt Lake City	29.7%
Stockton CA	29.2%
Sacramento CA	29.1%
Los Angeles CA	25.3%
Denver CO	23.9%

Source: Paul G. Merriam, *Portland, Oregon, 1840-1890: A Social and Economic History* (PhD diss., University of Oregon, 1971).

Table 9: Portland & Oregon African-American Population, 1850-1890

Year	Portland			Oregon	
	Number	As % of Port.	As % of OR A-F	Number	As % of OR
1850	4	0.5%	2.0%	207	1.6%
1860	16	0.6%	12.5%	128	0.2%
1870	147	1.8%	40.2%	346	0.4%
1880	182	1.1%	39.2%	487	0.3%
1890	480	1.0%	40.4%	1,186	0.4%
1900	775	0.9%	70.1%	1,105	0.3%

Source: U.S. Census; Paul G. Merriam, *Portland, Oregon, 1840-1890: A Social and Economic History* (PhD diss., University of Oregon, 1971).

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Informal Personal Communications

A number of Portland-area architects, historians, and preservation professionals provided important information through discussions, email exchanges and written comments on earlier drafts of this nomination. Though of a more-or-less informal nature, these communications provided direction, new facts, clarification and corrections critical to this document. Individuals providing such assistance include: Robert Dortignacq, architect and Chair of the Portland Historic Landmarks Commission; Richard Engeman, member of the Historic Landmarks Commission and public historian; Rob Mawson, preservation consultant with Heritage Consulting Group; Art DeMuro and Jessica Engeman of Venerable Properties; Al Staehli, architect and preservationist; John Russell, Old Town property owner, developer and former member of the Portland Historic Landmarks Commission; and especially, architect and preservationist William J. Hawkins, III, whose published works, personal files and knowledge of Portland's built heritage and history was invaluable.

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

Preliminary Determination of Individual Listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.

Previously Listed in the National Register: Portland Skidmore/Old Town Historic District (12/6/1975)

Previously Determined Eligible by the National Register.

Designated a National Historic Landmark. (May 5, 1977)

Recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey: HABS OR-51 (New Market Block & Theatre)

Recorded by Historic American Engineering Record:

Primary Location of Additional Data:

State Historic Preservation Office

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 Other State Agency Federal Agency Local Government: City of Portland, Oregon University Other (Specify Repository): Oregon Historical Society; Multnomah County Library; University of Oregon Library**10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

Acreage of Property: 42.5 acres

UTM References:	Zone	Easting	Northing
A	10	525448	5041321
B	10	525838	5041332
C	10	525466	5040708
D	10	525857	5040718

Verbal Boundary Description

Both the 1975 National Register and the 1977 National Historic Landmark nomination forms for the Skidmore/Old Town Historic District included maps showing district boundaries consistent with those specified for the local historic district established by City of Portland Ordinance # 140593 (September 1975). Neither nomination included a verbal boundary description. No changes are proposed in this updated nomination to the established boundary as described below and shown on attached maps M1 and M2.

In the State of Oregon, County of Multnomah, City of Portland, begin at a point at the northwest corner of Lot 4, Block 27 of Couch's Addition to the City of Portland; proceed thence in a southerly direction along the west line of Lots 4 and 1 of said Block 27 and the west line of Lots 8, 5, 4, and 1 of Block 28 to the southwest corner of Lot 1, Block 28; thence in a southerly direction to a point on the north line of Lot 7, Block 29 of Couch's Addition, 95 feet east of the northwest corner of said Lot 7, Block 29; thence in a southerly direction to a point 22 feet south and 5 feet west of the northwest corner of Lot 4, Block 29 of Couch's Addition; thence in an easterly direction 5 feet to a point on the west line of Lot 4, Block 29 of Couch's Addition, 28 feet north of the southwest corner of said Lot 4, Block 29; thence in a southerly direction along the west line of Lots 4 and 1 to the centerline of West Burnside Street; thence in an easterly direction along said centerline to its intersection with the centerline of NW/SW 3rd Avenue; thence in a southerly direction along the centerline of SW 3rd Avenue to its intersection with the centerline of SW Ash Street; thence in a southwesterly direction continuing along the centerline of SW 3rd Avenue to its intersection with the centerline of SW Pine Street; thence in a southeasterly direction along the centerline of SW Pine Street to its intersection with the centerline of SW Second Avenue; thence in a southwesterly direction along the centerline of SW Second Avenue to its intersection with the centerline of SW Oak Street; thence in a southeasterly direction along the centerline of SW Oak Street to its intersection with the centerline of SW First Avenue; thence in a southwesterly direction along the centerline of SW First Avenue to a point midway between SW Oak Street and SW Stark Street; thence in a

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southeasterly direction along the south line of Blocks 7 and 2 of Block 40 of PORTLAND and continuing in a southeasterly direction along the south line of Lot 2 of Block 80 to the harbor line; thence in a northerly direction along the harbor line to a point where it intersects the north line of Lots 3 and 4 of Blocks 7, 14, and 17 of Couch's Addition; thence in a westerly direction along said north line of Lots 3 and 4 of Blocks 7, 14, and 17, to the point of beginning.

Boundary Justification

No boundary justification was provided on either the 1975 National Register or 1977 National Historic Landmark nomination forms. The boundaries of the Skidmore/Old Town Historic District were drawn to include a significant concentration of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century commercial buildings that collectively establish a distinct historic sense of place and memorialize Portland's early commercial core. Historical, visual, and physical factors determined the boundaries. Historic factors include early and subsequent development patterns, building uses and associations. Visual factors include consistency in building styles, height, scale, massing, and setback. Physical factors include the layout of streets and property lines, and geographical features. The area to the east of the historic district is defined by the Willamette River. The area to the south and southwest is dominated by generally larger downtown buildings constructed after the period of significance. The area to the west and northwest is defined by the adjacent National Register-listed New Chinatown/Japantown Historic District. The area to the north contains a mixture of newer buildings, vacant and redeveloping land and industrial/rail facilities.

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11. FORM PREPARED BY

Name/Title: Liza Mickle, City Planner, Historic Resources Program, Portland Bureau of Planning
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National Historic Landmarks Program
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Washington, DC 20240

Telephone: (202) 354-2216

DESIGNATED A NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK
May 5, 1977
REVISED DOCUMENTATION
October 6, 2008

NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK NOMINATION

NPS Form 10-900

USDI/NPS NRHP Registration Form (Rev. 8-86)

OMB No. 1024-0018

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1. NAME OF PROPERTY

Historic Name: Skidmore/Old Town Historic District (Revised Documentation)

Other Name/Site Number: N/A

2. LOCATION

Street & Number: Multiple

Not for publication: N/A

City/Town: Portland

Vicinity: N/A

State: Oregon

County: Multnomah

Code: 051

Zip Code: 97204

3. CLASSIFICATION

Ownership of Property

Private: X

Public-Local: X

Public-State: ___

Public-Federal: ___

Object: ___

Category of Property

Building(s): ___

District: X

Site: ___

Structure: ___

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing

55

1

1

57

Noncontributing

21 buildings

22 sites

___ structures

1 objects

44 Total

Number of Contributing Resources Previously Listed in the National Register:

Name of Related Multiple Property Listing: N/A

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4. STATE/FEDERAL AGENCY CERTIFICATION

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this ___ nomination ___ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria.

Signature of Certifying Official

Date

State or Federal Agency and Bureau

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of Commenting or Other Official

Date

State or Federal Agency and Bureau

5. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that this property is:

- Entered in the National Register
- Determined eligible for the National Register
- Determined not eligible for the National Register
- Removed from the National Register
- Other (explain):

Signature of Keeper

Date of Action

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6. FUNCTION OR USE

Historic:	Domestic Commerce/Trade Government Social Religion Recreation & Culture Health Care Landscape Industry Transportation	Sub: multiple dwelling, hotel business, professional, organizational, financial institution, specialty store, restaurant, warehouse city hall civic, meeting hall religious facility, church school theater, music facility, work of art hospital, medical business plaza, street furniture/object manufacturing facility, industrial storage rail-related, water-related, pedestrian related
Current:	Domestic Commerce/Trade Social Government Health care Recreation & Culture Landscape Industry Transportation Work in progress	Sub: multiple dwelling, hotel business, professional, organizational, specialty store, restaurant, warehouse civic fire station, public works clinic museum, outdoor recreation, monument/marker, work of art park, parking lot, plaza, street furniture/object manufacturing facility, industrial storage rail-related, pedestrian-related redevelopment

7. DESCRIPTION

ARCHITECTURAL CLASSIFICATION: Late Victorian: Italianate, Romanesque, Gothic, Renaissance
 Late 19th & 20th Century Revivals: Italian Renaissance, Classical
 Late 19th & 20th Century American Movements: Commercial Style
 Other: Utilitarian, Richardsonian Romanesque, Sullivanese, Stripped Classical,
 Second Renaissance Revival, Queen Anne Italianate

MATERIALS:

Foundation: Brick, stone, concrete
 Walls: Brick, concrete, wood, metal (cast iron, ornamental sheet metal), stucco
 Roof: Metal, asphalt, bituminous
 Other: Glass

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SUMMARY

Portland's Skidmore/Old Town Historic District is nationally significant under National Historic Landmark Criterion 1 for its historical associations with the early development and economic growth of the Pacific Northwest's most important urban center of the last half of the nineteenth century. Portland's mercantile houses, commission agents, steamship companies and financial institutions, clustered along Front and First streets in and near the present Skidmore/Old Town Historic District, supplied the goods, services and trade connections that not only supported the development of western Oregon, but that of the greater Pacific Slope region. Skidmore/Old Town's historic commercial buildings memorialize Portland's position as a commercial entrepôt that linked a large dependant hinterland to national and global economic systems, and highlight the sometimes under-emphasized role of key urban centers in facilitating the settlement and development of the western United States. The district also served as a major West Coast locus for the provision of important "social services" and related urban functions oriented to the working classes, and in some cases ethnic minority groups, including: lodging for itinerant workers, sailors, and loggers; union halls; reading rooms; missions and chapels; ethnic publishing houses; and various popular entertainment and vice venues like saloons, gambling halls, burlesque houses, and brothels. Finally, Skidmore/Old Town's late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century transition from commercial core to Skid Road—an association it has yet to fully shed—exemplifies the changes in urban spatial organization seen in port cities across the nation whereby central business districts and high-status residential areas migrated away from historic waterfront areas which subsequently suffered from neglect, disinvestment, and loss of historic fabric through public "improvement" projects.

The district is equally significant under National Historic Landmark Criterion 4 for the exceptional architectural values of its mid- and late-nineteenth-century cast-iron commercial buildings—one of the finest collections in the nation and perhaps the most outstanding in the Far West. These two to four-story primarily Italianate structures work in concert with sympathetically scaled and designed late nineteenth-century Richardsonian Romanesque and early twentieth-century buildings to define the rich urban character that marks it as a national treasure. With elaborate decorative elements echoing Italian Renaissance designs, Skidmore/Old Town's "Commercial Palaces" notably contribute to Portland's architectural distinctiveness and collectively reflect both the economic success of its early businesses, and the high cultural aspirations of its citizens and leaders.

The Skidmore/Old Town District was listed on the National Register in 1975 and designated a National Historic Landmark in 1977. Neither nomination form included determinations fully comparable to current contributing/noncontributing categories.

Describe Present and Historic Physical Appearance.**SETTING**

The Skidmore/Old Town Historic District is located in the Central City area of Portland, Oregon. It is situated on the west bank of the Willamette River, where the Burnside Bridge meets downtown Portland. Here, the Portland townsite, platted beginning in 1845 with streets oriented to the flow of the Willamette River and magnetic north, meets Couch's Addition, platted beginning in 1850 with streets oriented to true north, creating an offset of about twenty degrees. The district is bisected by W Burnside Street, a major arterial that divides the city's west side into northwest and southwest quadrants.

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The district encompasses seventeen complete city blocks and seven partial blocks within an area of approximately forty-two acres. Commercial functions, including office, retail, light industry and warehouse uses predominate, with more than half of the district's properties currently dedicated to these uses. Housing accounts for approximately 14 percent of the total land use, and vacant land or parking lots account for 28 percent. The easterly portion of the district is defined by open space along the Willamette River, with a total of 4.5 acres in Waterfront Park. To the west, on the north side of Burnside Street, the district overlaps with the New Chinatown/Japantown Historic District, its similarly scaled nineteenth- and early twentieth-century structures complementing those of Skidmore/Old Town and creating a more-or-less integrated and identifiable historic central city area generally referred to as "Old Town." To the north and northwest lies the still transforming "River District," long devoted to industrial uses but increasingly dominated by high-density residential uses. To the south and southwest lies Portland's modern central business district, with a mix of generally larger-scale, historic and modern commercial structures, including the city's highest skyscrapers.

The boundaries of the district were drawn to include a significant concentration of historic nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century buildings, most of which retain a high degree of integrity. The period of significance begins in 1857, the construction date of the oldest extant resource in the district and ends in 1929, with the completion of the Willamette River seawall, which forced demolition of the Willamette River wharves extending from the trade houses along the east side of Front Street. Of the 101 resources recorded in the district, fifty-seven are classified as contributing and forty-four as noncontributing. Eighteen of the contributing properties are individually designated as local historic landmarks. Of the noncontributing properties, twenty sites are vacant.

HISTORIC AND PRESENT ARCHITECTURAL AND URBAN CHARACTER OF SKIDMORE/OLD TOWN

The Skidmore/Old Town Historic District is significant for its exceptional mid-nineteenth- to early twentieth-century commercial buildings. They present a broad range of commercial architectural styles that lend variety to the district's urban character, while working in concert to create a cohesive and distinct historic sense of place. The district includes a variety of styles, the most predominant being the Victorian Italianate, Richardsonian Romanesque and Commercial styles, but includes buildings in other styles such as Victorian Gothic and twentieth century Century Classical, as well as transitional expressions and amalgams. But the most noteworthy and defining elements of the district's historic character derive from its Victorian-era masonry and cast-iron façade buildings, primarily in the Italianate style. The district's cast-iron structures are the backbone of a distinctive historic cityscape marking Portland's first commercial core. This collection is one of the largest and best preserved in the American West.¹

¹ The definition and usage of the term "cast-iron building" is not uniform in architectural and historic preservation discourse. This nomination generally uses the term in the somewhat flexible sense defined by Antoinette Lee: "primarily a commercial structure with at least one story of cast-iron components in the façade – in other words, a façade which is defined more by cast iron components than by brick, stone, or timber," "Cast Iron in American Architecture," in H. Ward Jandhl, ed., *The Technology of Historic American Buildings: Studies of the Materials, Craft Processes, and the Mechanization of Building Construction* (Washington: Foundation for Preservation Technology, 1983), 99. See discussion in "Portland and Skidmore/Old Town cast-iron buildings in perspective" in Section 8."

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Street, block and lot patterns: a fine-grained grid sets the framework

In 1845, surveyor Thomas Brown platted sixteen blocks just south of today's Skidmore/Old Town Historic District, on land owned by Francis Pettygrove and Asa Lovejoy, forming the nucleus of the Portland townsite. The 200-foot square blocks, squared with the northeasterly flow of the river, were divided into eight 50' by 100' foot lots and surrounded by 60-foot wide streets (the magnetic north-south streets, running parallel to the river, would later be widened to 80 feet). While this rectilinear street and block pattern was consistent with widespread nineteenth-century American planning practices, Brown's grid was unusually fine-grained. Its small (approximately one-acre) blocks and narrow street dimensions were the smallest of any major West Coast city and remain amongst the smallest in the nation today. In 1849-50, new town site owner Daniel Lownsdale had R. V. Short re-survey the city, platting over 100 new blocks, right to the northern edge of the original land claim (the south line of today's Ankeny Street). In 1850, John Couch platted a portion of his claim, abutting just to the north, in the same pattern, although at an off-set, with streets running true north-south, maintaining the grid's orientation to the river where it bends to the west. This pronounced shift in the grid in the center of the district created more complex street and block patterns in the otherwise regular grid that dominates downtown, and continues to provide spatial interest and unusual opportunities for views of historic building façades.²

Thus by the early 1850s, all of the land within the present historic district was platted (though not necessarily improved) with a fine-grained grid that was perhaps more suited to a small village than an aspiring metropolis. This was to have profound effects on the area's urban form and character. As the blocks filled in, the small lots, some of which were further divided into even smaller parcels with only 25-foot frontages, and fragmented ownership resulted in continuous street walls that were articulated by small, individual façades and storefronts and punctuated by frequent corners and streets. Where larger, one-quarter to full-block buildings were constructed, the block sizes limited their overall bulk and massing. Thus, over time, the historic block and lot pattern combined with narrow streets and generally two- to four-story building heights to create streetscapes with a strong sense of urban enclosure that were yet intimate and human-scaled. For the most part, the district retains these characteristics today; the historic structures, lot and street patterns continue to define the area's physical sense of place. Although a number of historic buildings have been demolished with the resulting vacant lots creating gaps in the urban fabric, inappropriately-scaled or otherwise incompatible development from after the period of significance, has not overwhelmed the district's historic character. The most salient intrusion is the fourteen-story One Pacific Square building (#68) built in 1989, that lies only partly within the district on its northern edge.

Over time the regularity and connectivity provided by the street grid has been altered by major public interventions, particularly by the elevated Burnside Bridge ramps at the center of the district which run west to Second Avenue. Although the structure is in one sense a physical disruption, it is still somewhat permeable, with pedestrian and light rail traffic flowing freely underneath the ramps along First Avenue (although it is closed to automobiles). The light rail MAX line links the north and south parts of the district to each other, the rest of downtown, and the east side of the Willamette River.

² E. Kimbark MacColl, *Merchants, Money, and Power: The Portland Establishment, 1843-1913* (Portland: The Georgian Press, 1988), 8-9; *1863 City Directory*, 6-7.

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Log cabins and Wood Frames: The Lost Frontier Village of the 1840s and 1850s

Portland's settlement-era architectural history began in the 1840s with a small concentration of simple log and wood structures bordering the bank of the Willamette River. In 1844 or 1845, Francis Pettygrove and Asa Lovejoy erected two of the earliest buildings in the city at the foot of present day Washington Street, two blocks south of the current historic district. Like most of Portland's first structures, they were log-built. One was serving as a dwelling and the other serving as a warehouse and store, the latter notable for its cedar shingle roof (and perhaps siding), a refinement that remained uncommon in the city's first few years.³ One of the most noted early buildings was the 1847 Greek revival home built for Capt. Nathaniel Crosby at the corner of First and Washington. It was constructed of pre-cut lumber shipped around the Horn from Maine.⁴ The location and date of construction of the first structure within the historic district proper is not known with certainty, but among the earliest were Capt. John Couch's warehouse and wharf, constructed in 1849 near the center of the historic district at the foot of present day Burnside Street and anchoring the northern edge of the nascent town. As in many western towns in their infancy, 1840s Portland architecture was something of a hodgepodge. The earliest surviving drawings and photographs of Portland's commercial streets show generally modest wood-frame buildings in utilitarian vernacular styles, often with faint suggestions of the Greek revival. None of Portland's 1840s structures, and very few from the 1850s, survive.

Brick and cast iron commercial palaces: defining the character of Skidmore/Old Town, 1850s to 1890s

By late 1850, an observer noted that Portland had not less than 150 houses, eighteen stores, six boarding houses and two churches.⁵ Front Street, which ran parallel to the river, served as the main commercial street and was home to most of the early town's more substantial buildings.⁶ The 1850s saw the construction of the City's first brick buildings, including the one-story F. B. Miles & Co. building on the southwest corner of Front and Pine (1853, demolished), the one-story Coleman Building built for \$9,500 at the southeast corner of SW Front and Oak (1853, demolished), and the Hallock and McMillen Building (1857, # 99), located at the northwest corner of the same intersection.⁷ Although it has been significantly altered, the Hallock and McMillen building, built by Portland's first architect, Absalom Hallock, is the oldest extant structure in the district and marks the beginning of the period of significance. The Delschneider Building (# 90) was completed in 1859 on the north side of Oak Street between Front and First Streets. This narrow, three-story (originally two-story) Italianate structure is the third-oldest surviving building on its original site in Portland. Its relatively simple cast-iron and wood stylings mark the beginning of a three-decade era of cast-iron construction in which the district's architectural character was defined, and for which it is justly famous.

By 1865, Portland's population numbered approximately 6,000. Front Street, and to a lesser degree First Street, were the primary commercial thoroughfares and the city could boast fifteen one-story, thirty-seven two-story,

³ MacColl, *Merchants, Money, and Power*, 8; Harvey Scott, *History of Portland* (Portland: Mason, 1890), 80-94.

⁴ Percy Maddux, *City on the Willamette* (Portland: Binfords & Mort, 1952), 18; William John Hawkins, III, *The Grand Era of Cast-Iron Architecture in Portland* (Portland: Binfords & Mort, 1976), 8.

⁵ Charles H. Carey, *General History of Oregon* (Portland: Binfords & Mort, 1971), 655.

⁶ Throughout the period of significance this thoroughfare was called *Front Street*, having been briefly known as *Water Street* in the 1840s. Its name was changed to *Front Avenue* in the mid-twentieth century. More recently, a section of *Front Avenue*, including the segment running through the historic district, has been renamed *Naito Parkway*. Generally, this road is referred to as *Front Street* in this nomination for consistency with historical sources. An exception is the list of contributing and noncontributing resources, where *Naito Parkway* is used.

⁷ Harvey Scott, *History of Portland* (Portland: Mason, 1890), chap. 5.

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and seven three-story brick commercial buildings.⁸ Portland's successful businessmen and their architects increasingly chose cast iron as a structural and ornamental building material, and cast-iron fronted, Italianate style trade houses began to line Front Street. Four architects known to be active in Portland by this time include: Absalom B. Hallock, mentioned above; Elwood M. Burton, who arrived ca. 1855; William W. Piper, who arrived in 1863; and John Nestor, who arrived in 1864. Harley McDonald was another early architect who did work in the district.⁹ During the decades of the 1870s and 1880s, the former village grew into a major West Coast city, with a central business district marked by substantial three- to four-story brick commercial buildings, predominantly in the Italianate style, with significant use of structural and decorative cast iron. In the 1880s at the peak of this development phase, the blocks between the Willamette River and Fourth Street were in-filled with solid masonry and cast-iron buildings replacing many first generation wood frame structures. Scores of blocks were architecturally unified by Renaissance-inspired arched and colonnaded cast-iron façades.¹⁰ First Street had emerged as a more genteel, retail- and office-oriented complement to Front Street which remained a bustling, working-waterfront area. Historians Terence O'Donnell and Thomas Vaughn evoked the flavor of Front Street in this era:

Coming ashore from a four-master or paddlewheeler and passing through the cavernous sheds, one came out onto cobbled Front Street to see on its far side these buildings, managing somehow to look both flamboyant and grave, filled with the activity of shipping offices, emporiums, saloons and oyster houses, glimmering in the rain.¹¹

Today, Skidmore/Old Town's historic architectural character is defined by a mix of nineteenth-century building types: Italianate-style commercial buildings with cast-iron façades that date from the late 1850s through the 1880s, and the more massive brick and stone Richardsonian Romanesque structures constructed during the following two decades. Several early twentieth century commercial style buildings add another sympathetic layer to the mix.

More than one-quarter of the extant buildings in the district were constructed in the Italianate style, ranging in height from one to four stories. Characteristic features include masonry bearing walls, bracketed cornices, and use of architectural cast iron and pronounced moldings on the façades. The brick walls were left exposed or covered with stucco. Arched openings and segmentally arched windows on the upper stories and bracketed cornices along the roofline were other defining features of this style. Commonly, windows pierced brick walls, and the pier between the windows was treated as a pilaster or was stuccoed to suggest a wide column. Upper-floor window arches were often capped with iron keystones, and iron decorations were placed at the capitals of the pilasters or in the spandrel panels between the arches.¹² Many of these buildings were of loft-type construction—creating flexible space usable for many retail, wholesale, warehouse and manufacturing uses.

The impressive Blagen Block, a four-story commercial palace constructed in 1888, remains from that era in Skidmore/Old Town (# 71). It was used by Marcus Whiffen in *American Architecture since 1780* to exemplify

⁸ Hawkins, *Grand Era of Cast-Iron Architecture*, 32.

⁹ Richard Ellison Ritz, *Architects of Oregon: A Biographical Dictionary of Architects Deceased—19th and 20th Centuries* (Portland: Grenhills, 1991) passim; Hawkins, *Grand Era of Cast-Iron Architecture*, 32.

¹⁰ William John Hawkins, III, "Befriending Your Cast Iron District", *Old Portland Today*, April 15, 1975, 14.

¹¹ Terence O'Donnell and Thomas Vaughn, *A Historical Sketch and Guide* (Portland: Oregon Historical Society 1963),

110.

¹² Hawkins, *Grand Era of Cast-Iron Architecture*, 20.

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the High Victorian Italianate style.¹³ Long occupied by the W. C. Noon sail-making and canvas products business, it represents a building type that once predominated in this section of the city. Its construction was not only ornate but substantial, including special steam elevators to carry heavy materials from the brick basement to the fourth floor.¹⁴

In 1882, Warren H. Williams, early Portland's most productive architect, designed the Allen & Lewis Block on SW Front (demolished). This building veered away from the more classical forms of the Italianate style, into a new style known as Modern Gothic, which blended medieval and "modern" design elements in eclectic ways. While it included typically Gothic pointed window openings and arches, unlike earlier Gothic-inspired design, it was adorned with geometric ornamentation bolted on to an otherwise typical cast-iron structure. The Bickel Block on SW Second and Ash (#91), constructed in 1883, experiments with Gothic motifs within the High Victorian Italianate Style. Other more lavish buildings included the Starr Block of 1882 and the Kamm Building of 1884, both four-story structures with observation towers that reached the same heights as church spires. The Kamm Building was also exceptional for Portland in combining various architectural styles, including modern Gothic, Romanesque, and general Victorian extravagance. Huge wooden figures of Atlas and Hermes supported the balcony and cornice, respectively, in a show of architectural opulence that was unprecedented at the time. These buildings unfortunately no longer exist.

Construction of special-purpose buildings increased beginning in the 1870s. A prominent and district character-defining example is the New Market Theater, built by Captain A. P. Ankeny and Andrew J. Watson in 1872 (# 45). It was designed by architects Piper & Burton and cost the substantial sum of \$100,000. With its huge cast-iron columns, arches, and wealth of decorative details, it was an impressive multi-purpose building that mixed retail commerce with entertainment and business concerns. It was considered an architectural wonder from the moment it opened to the public. The name was derived from the public market located on the ground floor. A 200' arcade passed through the building, lined with twenty-eight marble stalls. On the second floor, the great hall measured 60' by 100', with 35' ceilings, a perimeter balcony, 100 gas-lit crystal chandeliers and sconces, and 800 to 1,200 seats. It became the venue for great entertainers of the 1870s and 1880s. Today, the structure is intact and has been rehabilitated, although the interior was altered significantly. The building continues to rank as one of Portland's most significant structures, both in terms of design and its place in the city's early cultural life.

By the early 1890s, elegant buildings lined the streets in the Skidmore/Old Town Historic District from Front Street through Third Street. Approximately two hundred of them had cast-iron fronts or substantial iron decorations. Many of the cast-iron patterns echoed Italian Renaissance designs, with elegant free-standing columns topped by round arches and rusticated pilasters. The repeated pattern of free-standing columns created a distinctive sense of architectural coherence in the commercial district. On some blocks, the pattern dominated both sides of the street. The existing Smith Block of 1872 provides a glimpse of how the area must have looked, with row after row of unified façades (# 96, # 78). The Smith Block is the last remaining Portland structure to display a specific cast-iron pattern, introduced in the late 1860s, that was repeated on at least nine other buildings along First and Front Streets, north of Pine. The pattern included 12-foot high fluted Corinthian columns spaced seven feet nine inches apart and spanned by coffered arches decorated with flower medallions. It also included decorative spandrel panels of heads intertwined with foliage. Use of this pattern over approximately 1,000 linear feet of building fronts created an architectural unity in the district rarely seen in

¹³ Marcus Whiffen, *American Architecture since 1780, A Guide to the Styles* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1969), 97.

¹⁴ Heritage sign on Blagen Block, 30-34 NW First Avenue (no citation).

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American cities.¹⁵ By contrast, the Kamm Building, constructed on Pine between Front and First Streets approximately two decades later, displayed a more exuberant and eclectic variety of ornamentation and made a more individualistic architectural statement.

The 1889 Glisan Building (# 48) is probably the latest structure in the city that is defined by a predominant use of architectural cast-iron. Its design elements both echoed the past and pointed to the future, marking it as a transitional building. Small individual windows on the second floor, divided by brick piers suggesting columns, were characteristics of an earlier period. Similarly, the use of cast iron on the lower floor was typical of many buildings of the 1880s, with large display windows divided by smaller cast-iron columns at the two entrances. The building's decorations, however, were more prophetic of the 1890s than typical of the 1880s. The columns and pediments featured intertwining scroll designs, somewhat Art Nouveau in style. This would become the fashionable decorative trend of the 1890s. With this building, the "grand era" of cast-iron architecture came to a close. Approximately twenty structures from the cast-iron era remain in the Skidmore/Old Town area, "from the most remarkable period of early growth in the city."¹⁶

The Richardsonian Romanesque style began to replace the Italianate style beginning in the late 1880s. Seven remaining buildings in the district are in this style. This new style turned away from the hallmarks of the cast-iron era and introduced an aesthetic that had developed on the East Coast and was more suited to the era's increasingly large structures. Tall, narrow individual windows gave way to window bays between structural columns and large banks of windows. Walls were characterized by heavy brick and stone work rather than the more airy cast iron. Many Richardsonian Romanesque buildings had characteristically pronounced lower-story bases faced with heavy and rusticated stonework, as in the New Market Annex (# 46) and the Haseltine Building (# 36). The emerging Art Nouveau style, though not lending a predominant flavor to the district, introduced stylized decorative elements to buildings, such as the Skidmore Block (#72) and the Glisan Building (#48) that looked more organic than applied.

The period 1870-1899 represents a building boom in the Skidmore/Old Town Historic District. In terms of structures that exist today, the greatest numbers of buildings were constructed during the 1880s. There are nine remaining resources from the 1870s, seventeen from the 1880s, and eight from the 1890s. With the beginning of the twentieth century, construction activity in the district began to decline. Between 1900 and the end of the period of significance (1929), a total of twenty-two buildings remain.

Progress and decline: early 1900s to the Mid-Twentieth Century

In Portland, as in the rest of the country, architectural and engineering practices were undergoing rapid change and innovation as the nineteenth century drew to a close. The development of cast-iron building fronts and structural elements had paved the way for modular construction systems and the emergence of the modern steel skyscraper. Steel replaced cast iron as the material of choice, and proved to be a far more adaptable structural material. New forms of architectural expression also emerged, including the Commercial and Utilitarian styles. Simpler, more streamlined buildings were constructed in Skidmore/Old Town, with rectangular openings replacing arched window and door openings, among other changes. The detailing and decorative elements of these buildings were far less ornate and exuberant than their earlier counterparts. There are over a dozen of these late nineteenth- and twentieth-century Commercial style buildings in the district.

¹⁵ Hawkins, *Grand Era of Cast-Iron Architecture*, 48.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 20-21.

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From the earliest years, lodging establishments and small hotels dotted the district. They were built to serve business visitors to the commercial district and also the transient housing needs of itinerant laborers and men employed in the teeming waterfront commercial area. The earliest lodging structures were generally small and wood-framed, many converted from single-family houses and replaced over time by more substantial masonry buildings. Several examples of residential buildings from the turn of the century through the 1930s remain in the district, many in the Commercial style. Typically one to four stories tall, ground floors were designed for commercial uses, with lodging above. Of wood or wood and brick construction, these buildings often have Italianate flourishes, such as bracketed cornices, brick detailing, and arched windows. The three-story Fritz Hotel (# 18) built in 1913 on NW Third Avenue, is comparable in size, texture and materials with other lodging establishments of similar date within the district. Hotels and rooming houses were designed in several period revival styles, including substantial buildings such as the Western Rooms (# 34) in the Second Renaissance Revival style and Erickson's Saloon/Hotel (# 31) in the twentieth-century classical style, and smaller-scale buildings such as the Glade Hotel (# 17) in the twentieth-century Romanesque style. Accommodations ranged from the most basic to very comfortable, although the city's choicest hotel accommodations tended to now locate south of the district. In general terms, the lodging establishments constructed in the early 1900s, though of solid and elegant design, reflected the economic and social distinctions ingrained in Skidmore/Old Town's waterfront history and its evolution from a prime commercial district to a more transitional area.

As waterfront activity moved downstream and development and business activity focused on other parts of the core area, neglect set in for Portland's earliest commercial district and its old-fashioned buildings. Portland's newer, taller, more modern buildings were sited "uptown," which was considered a more fashionable and progressive area to do business. The area had become run down and public sentiment was turning negative. As a sign of the times, there was even an effort to move the beloved landmark Skidmore Fountain uptown, away from urban decay. A 1928 article in the *Oregonian* was scathing: "People go to New York and delight to prowl in the shabby old buildings of Greenwich Village; to New Orleans and revel in the ancient Creole district; to Los Angeles and enjoy the quaintness of the old Plaza mission district. They come home and affect disgust because the Skidmore Fountain is kept in a district that is old and shabby."¹⁷ Protests from preservationists saved the day, at least for the fountain, and it remains in its original location.

That same year—1928—demolition of cast-iron buildings began with the 1867 Bank of British Columbia, which occupied a triangular block between SW Ankeny and Vine Street (Vine was later vacated). The magnificent Kamm Block was razed in 1939. Many of the district's buildings by this time were underutilized, were being used for "dead" storage, or had converted to "flop houses." A combination of circumstances, including periodic flooding, the loss of shipping activities, business relocations, and bridge bypasses, had left the waterfront area blighted and neglected. City authorities implemented several major public infrastructure plans and waterfront projects to deal with these issues. These projects entailed demolition of dozens of cast-iron buildings along Front Street (now known as Naito Parkway). In 1941 and 1942, entire blocks were demolished on the east side of Front, including the 1882 Starr Block (between Pine and Oak), the 1882 Allen & Lewis Block (between Couch and Davis), the 1888 Dodd Block (between Ankeny and Vine), the 1879 Central Block (between Front and Ash), and the 1882 Cook's Building (just north of Ash). These demolitions were generally regarded as a sign of progress. While nostalgically recalling the glory days of the "Cavalcade of Front Street," Henry Reed yet believed sacrifices were necessary, writing in 1941:

¹⁷ Ibid., 162.

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*The Front Avenue project is Portland's greatest traffic undertaking...it will have other economic effects of importance. It will arrest the decline of the old business district, and if property owners show some of the spirit and enterprise of the city's founders, will result, in time, in more profitable use of property, and increased values.*¹⁸

In 1958 the *Oregon Journal* wrote optimistically about the changes wrought by the Front Avenue project, which would “promote industrial recovery...[and] rehabilitate a large section of downtown Portland.”¹⁹ Sadly, the anticipated changes failed to materialize as envisioned, and empty blocks throughout the district remained as parking lots. Just three years after its earlier article, the *Oregon Journal* said, “The parking lot expands its boundaries, they [historic buildings] stand out more defiantly than ever—not as simple-minded leftovers of the Gay Nineties, but as avenging angels. Glass and enlightened mass may have taken their toll, but those that remain remind us of something perhaps missing from the city’s perfect new architecture.”²⁰

The Era of Preservation: Mid-Twentieth Century to the Present

Fortunately, the “avenging angels” described by the *Oregon Journal* continue to stand watch in the Skidmore/Old Town Historic District; depending on definition of terms, approximately twenty cast-iron buildings remain standing, according to architectural historian William Hawkins. Beginning tentatively in the 1960s and continuing with fits and starts to the present, preservationists, civic leaders, property owners and citizens have worked to improve our understanding of Old Town’s history and architecture, implement preservation policies, and undertake renovation and rehabilitation projects. Since the designation of the historic district in 1975, investments by property owners, including the pioneering efforts of Bill Naito, who rescued many historic structures in the district and throughout the greater downtown, have generally maintained or improved the condition and integrity of the district’s contributing structures.

Another preservation activity of importance was salvage of architectural artifacts from demolished structures. During the 1950s and 1960s, Portland preservationist Eric Ladd had the foresight to acquire cast-iron façades, columns and other decorative work from a number of buildings in and near the district.²¹ In the 1970s, with the formation of the advocacy group Portland Friends of Cast-Iron Architecture and the publication of William Hawkins’ *The Grand Era of Cast Iron Architecture in Portland*, public awareness of the city’s cast-iron architecture increased, and many salvaged cast-iron artifacts were acquired from Eric Ladd and reused in the district. For example, in 1984, columns from the New Market North Wing (demolished in 1956) were reinstalled in their original positions adjacent to the New Market Theater (#45), partially reconstituting the street edge-defining colonnade (some portions are reproductions molded from original pieces). Other artifacts were mounted on the exterior of the Fire Station (# 76) and incorporated into Ankeny Park and the arcade at the foot of Ankeny Street. Ladd’s collection was subsequently purchased by the Portland Development Commission (PDC) for potential future use in public improvement and development projects in Old Town.

Building Alterations

According to city records, most of the recorded exterior changes in the Skidmore/Old Town Historic District were modifications/additions/removal of entrances and windows, “storefront” alterations, signage changes and

¹⁸ Henry E. Reed, *Cavalcade of Front Street* (Portland: Wakefield-Fries & Woodward, 1941).

¹⁹ Hawkins, *Grand Era of Cast-Iron Architecture*, 163.

²⁰ *Oregon Journal*, August, 21, 1961: 11.

²¹ See William Hawkins, Eric Ladd, Cast-Iron Collection Evaluation [n.d., ca. Sept 2007].

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various surface alterations (such as covering over cast ironwork).²² However, based on an examination of early photographs and field assessments, it is evident that many alterations were not recorded and some were more pervasive than the records indicate. Most major alterations, from the covering or removal of architectural decoration to partial or total demolition, took place in the mid-twentieth century. Beginning in the 1960s major rehabilitations, renovations, and seismic upgrades started occurring, with a noticeable spurt in such activity in the early and mid-1980s. More detailed descriptions of alterations are provided in the descriptions of individual properties below.

Streetscape Elements and the Public Realm

The design and material characteristics of Skidmore/Old Town's streetscape elements, including its paving materials, street lighting, signage and rain protections, gave pattern and texture to the early district and have continued to evolve over time. A basic description of these aspects of the public realm is important for understanding the historic and present physical contexts of the district.²³

The first streets in the district as in other parts of the city, were dirt, possibly with some gravel in the early years. An early street surface was "Nicholson Paving," blocks of end-grain wood. This was unsatisfactory because the material tended to float away during floods. Cobblestone paving was introduced in the 1870s and was often called "Belgian Block." Contrary to popular myth, most of these paving stones came from basalt quarries in St. Helens and elsewhere in the region rather than arriving as ballast in foreign ships. The full width of Front, First and Second Streets were paved with cobblestones for their full length within the district, as were portions of Oak, Pine, Couch, and Davis. Third Avenue had cobblestones in the center streetcar track bed. East/west streets not cobbled were "macadamized" (rolled aggregate and oil). In subsequent years, the streets were paved over with asphalt; in some cases cobblestones were removed and replaced with asphalt or concrete. Cobblestone paving remains beneath many asphalt-covered streets in and near the district. The cobblestones are salvaged and stored by the City when they are uncovered during street work and they are occasionally reused in public projects, as in the right-of-way improvements associated with the light rail line along First Avenue and in Ankeny Park.

The earliest sidewalks in the area were made of wood. Granite or basalt curbs were usually installed when cobblestone paving was introduced. Most wood walks continued through the turn of the nineteenth century, when they were replaced with concrete. 1903 was the earliest date found on concrete sidewalks existing in 1976. Many original concrete sidewalks appear intact with notable exceptions at intersections where handicapped ramps have been installed. Some granite and basalt curbs and iron horse rings remain. Until 1962, when Skidmore Fountain Plaza was developed, there were no special pedestrian areas in the district. There is little evidence of landscaping in the district during the nineteenth and early twentieth century, other than potted trees, balcony planters, and residential yards. Street trees are a recent phenomenon, beginning with building improvements in the early 1960s.

The first street lights were oil lamps on wood poles. Gas lights were first installed in 1859. The gas fixtures, made in New York, were of a design common in many cities – four-sided clear glass lamps on ornamental cast-iron standards. It is believed these were installed throughout most of the district, at least in the area south of

²² City of Portland, Bureau of Development Services, building permit records and land use review case files.

²³ Information in this subsection was drawn in part from *Skidmore Old Town Historic District Development Program, Implementation Schedule, Development Standards*, a document prepared in 1976 for the Portland Development Commission by Allen-McMath-Hawkins-Architects and Wallace K. Huntington, Landscape Architect.

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Burnside, and it is possible that Portland foundries made the poles. Gas lights were added to telephone poles after their introduction in the late 1870s and early 1880s. By 1885, electric street lights began replacing gas lights. The earliest ones were of the carbon arc type and were suspended from telephone poles at intersections and set on standards at mid-block. Through the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries a variety of lights were used as technology advanced and styles changed. Also, many businesses installed specially designed street lights in front of their own properties, a practice that has continued to the present.

The first effort toward establishing a standard downtown lighting system began around 1914. The fixture consisted of an ornamental cast-iron standard, with three glass balls arranged around the standard and a fourth ball on top. This "4-Ball" fixture was used throughout the downtown area. It is not known to what extent these fixtures appeared in the district, although it is likely they were on Third Avenue and possibly on other streets; a few are in place in front of the Blagen Block on NW First. The present "Downtown Ornamental" fixture began replacing the "4-Ball" fixture in 1925. Except on Burnside, they were never used in the district.

During the nineteenth century many buildings provided some form of rain protection to adjacent sidewalk areas. There were generally three basic types: awnings; wood or metal canopies supported by brackets and posts; and second-level wood porches supported by iron or wood posts at the curb line. Most historic examples have been lost, but many buildings continue to provide rain cover in the form of awnings and canopies of more recent construction. The awnings currently on the restored Freimann Kitchen Building (#89) and Freimann Restaurant Building (#84) replicate its original awnings, based on a historical image. Many buildings also had wrought-iron balconies attached at the window openings of their façades, most of which have since been removed.

Nineteenth century buildings were often identified by name and date with carved or cast lettering and numerals usually located in a central architectural feature at the top story. Advertising signs were predominantly painted signs directly on the building, or on wood or metal panels. Signage was also commonly applied as gold-leaf paint on storefront windows. In Portland's earliest years, street names were attached to the curbs of wooden sidewalks. Occasionally, they were painted or inscribed on buildings, as can be seen on the New Market Annex (#46) and the Haseltine Building (#36). Street names were attached to telephone poles after they were introduced in the late 1870s. Illuminated signs were seen soon after electricity came to the city in the 1880s. Neon signs were developed in 1926 and became a popular form of identification and advertisement. Signs became larger and were mounted on roofs or building walls and were visible for miles. Few of the larger signs remain today, a result of both changing styles and local regulations, although a number of faded and decaying, early twentieth-century painted advertisements are still visible on various buildings. The White Stag neon and bulb-lit sign facing NW Front (Naito Parkway) was erected in 1940 (#93). Originally it was configured to advertise White Satin Sugar, before being converted in 1957 for the White Stag Company. In 1997 the sign was modified to advertise the Made in Oregon Company. The sign is both a visual icon and a designated local Historic Landmark.

Summary of Major Alterations to the Streetscape and Public Realm

In the contemporary era, there have been a number of significant changes to the streetscape, public spaces and the urban fabric in general. In 1960, Vine Street, the most northerly in the original townsite, was vacated. The present Skidmore Fountain Plaza and Ankeny Park were dedicated in 1962 in the Vine Street right-of-way and on the adjacent triangular block to the north, where the Bank of British Columbia once stood. Close to Ankeny Park, the seasonal Saturday Market opened in 1974 with a grant from the Metropolitan Arts Commission. It quickly became a local fixture, spreading out in right-of-ways and vacant lots south of W. Burnside. After the

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market opened, the condition of Ankeny Park began to deteriorate, mainly due to increased use and foot traffic. In the early 1980s, a National Park Service grant funded redevelopment of the park to provide a suitable space for cultural programs and exhibits. Turf was replaced with pavers, new lighting was installed, and the area was marked with salvaged cast-iron columns and arches.²⁴ In 2007, plans for new paving were approved for Ankeny Plaza as part of an effort to refurbish the popular public space in the center of the district.

In 1974, the decision to remove Harbor Drive and replace it with Tom McCall Waterfront Park was an important step in promoting the urban renaissance that the city has since experienced. The properties adjacent to the park now have views of and access to the Willamette River. Public amenities in Tom McCall Waterfront Park include trees, grassy areas that are used for seasonal festivals, and two memorial parks. A well traveled pedestrian and bicycle path alongside the river provides access through the eastern edge of the district. The MAX light rail line began service in 1986 from downtown Portland across the Willamette River to points east, winding through the historic district along SW First Avenue. Other changes wrought by a new focus on downtown revitalization in the 1970s and 1980s included: limitations on the creation of new parking; policies to maintain the historic street grid and blocks; and design regulations to promote active street-level storefronts. Both private and public funds were dedicated to rehabilitation projects. In 2007, as part of Waterfront Park improvements recommended through an extensive public process, changes were approved for the light rail (MAX) station under the Burnside Bridge on 1st Avenue. The changes included adding a new retail area to the west and a glass screening wall to the east of 1st Avenue in this heavily traveled area.

The Skidmore/Old Town Historic District also incorporates a newer memorial park on Waterfront Park. The Japanese-American Historical Plaza, dedicated in 1990, pays tribute to Japanese-American immigrants and their sacrifices during World War II. Sited a few short blocks away from what was once pre-war Japantown, it is defined by trees and a curving wall of large inscribed memorial stones along the Willamette River esplanade. Another war memorial is located further south along the waterfront, at the southern edge of the district. It is the Battleship Oregon Memorial Marine Park, a small (7,000' square foot) park that was formally dedicated in 1976 as part of the Bicentennial. The focus of the park is the mast from the battleship, which was given to the City of Portland in 1943. In the future, this site may be moved closer to the waterfront to enhance the maritime theme of the park.²⁵ In 2007, several alterations and public improvements were projected for construction in three phases in the Waterfront Park area, as follows: in the first phase, adding an event platform and shelter; a circular plaza with a water feature; a seawall overlook; and improvements to Ankeny Pump Station, including ornamental fencing. In the second phase, constructing a restroom; and in the final phase, extending the dock pier and constructing a floating dock into the Willamette River.

LIST OF CONTRIBUTING RESOURCES

Evaluations of individual historic district resources prepared for the original 1975 National Register and 1977 National Historic Landmark nominations were made under documentation and evaluation standards that have since been refined by the National Park Service (NPS). The nominations and supporting material used terminology that is not fully comparable with current "contributing" and "noncontributing" determination requirements.²⁶ Subsequent to 1977, the early rankings were "translated" into contributing or noncontributing

²⁴ Zari Santer, Portland Bureau of Parks, memorandum to Elisabeth Potter, Oregon SHPO files, October 20, 1983.

²⁵ City of Portland, Bureau of Parks, *Waterfront Park Assessment of Conditions and Issues*, April 2001.

²⁶ The resources were generally assigned one of the following rankings: Historic-Primary (occasionally "Primary Landmark"), Historic-Secondary, Compatible, Non-Compatible, Vacant or Parking. See 1975 and 1977 nomination forms and maps and "Portland Skidmore/Old Town Historic District Property Ownerships," May 1977.

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classifications, although this process is not well documented and appears, in some cases, to be inconsistent with the 1975/1977 evaluations. The classifications in this updated nomination form are based on a new inventory of the district's resources, additional research, and application of current National Register and National Historic Landmark evaluation standards.

The fifty-seven properties listed below are classified as contributing in the Skidmore/Old Town Historic District. In two instances, properties were reclassified (from their *most recent* previous classifications—which were not always consistent with 1975/1977 evaluations) as contributing, due to appropriate improvements, restoration, or rehabilitation, since 1977. In four instances, properties were reclassified as contributing to reflect new research on the properties and to bring the classifications up to current standards for documentation and evaluation. These six properties clearly contribute to the sense of place, architectural character, and significance of the Skidmore/Old Town Historic District.

The resources are grouped into three sections: Northwest; West (Burnside Street); and Southwest, and are listed by street (numbered streets preceding named streets) in ascending order of street number. Preferred historic names are shown first in **bold** type, followed by common and other names in parentheses. In cases where historic names cannot be determined with certainty, the current common name is first shown in **bold italics**. Map M1 accompanying this document identifies properties by inventory numbers, which are listed at the end of the property descriptions below (for example, # 42). A table of all district resources organized by inventory number is also appended to facilitate locating individual structures. The 1975 nomination identified a group of “primary landmarks” that were especially important in the district. These properties are highlighted and are generally described in greater detail.

Northwest

- *NW First Avenue*

Skidmore Block (White Stag Block) (# 72): 10-32 NW First Avenue (Current street address is 5 NW Front Ave., shared with the Bickel Block (#91) and the White Stag Building (#92), due to a 2008 lot consolidation. The three buildings are now collectively referred to by the common name White Stag Block) (1889). Italianate, Sullivanesque. Architect unknown.

The Skidmore Block was constructed as a warehouse for Charles Sitton, business partner to Stephen Skidmore, who had bequeathed the land on which the structure sits to Sitton. It represents a transitional style between the district's typical Victorian cast-iron architecture and the new styles of the 1890s. This four-story commercial building is brick with stucco covering the upper three floors. At the street level, there is a colonnade of rusticated stone columns and cast-iron intermediate columns at the street level. The use of cast iron on the lower floor was typical of many buildings of the 1880s. Four bays on the front façade are embellished with tall pilasters with Art Nouveau detailing on the capitals. Details could be described as Sullivanesque, although the vertical composition is broken by strong horizontal spandrels. The tall, narrow individual windows are rectangular at the second story, and arched on the upper stories. Major alterations on the south façade occurred in 1926, when the rounded stone arch over the corner on Burnside Street was removed as part of street widening for construction of the Burnside Bridge. The interior was remodeled extensively in the 1970s and 1980s. Beginning in 2006, the Skidmore Block and two immediately adjacent buildings, the White Stag Building and the Bickel Block, were extensively renovated and remodeled for new uses as the University of Oregon's Portland center and as office space. On the Skidmore Block, the roof and parapet caps were replaced and a sheet metal cornice was added, similar to one that was previously removed. Skylights were added. On the

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south and west facades, windows were replaced with aluminum-clad wood ones. This building was listed as a “primary landmark” in the 1975 National Register nomination.

Norton House (# 55): 29-87 NW First Avenue (1875). Italianate. Architect unknown.

This two-story brick building with stucco facing was designed as a hotel. It was also used as a warehouse, restaurant, rooming house, and retail space. In 1877, *The West Shore* magazine described the Norton House as “possessing all the modern improvements and located near the railroad and steam boat landings, with street cars passing the house every five minutes...”²⁷ Design elements include Italianate segmental lintels and keystones above the windows. The third floor on this building was destroyed by fire. Alterations also have included storefront modifications and extensive changes to the rear façade. The original shed roof at the sidewalk was replaced with a metal shed roof of simpler design.

Blagen Block (# 71): 30 NW First Avenue (1888). High Victorian Italianate. Warren H. Williams, architect. Neils J. Blagen, contractor.

This building was constructed for office, manufacturing and warehouse use, and housed for many years the W. C. Noon Bag Co., one of the largest makers of bags, tents, awnings, and sails on the West Coast. The one-hundred foot front of the Blagen Block is one of the last remaining examples of the rhythmic rows of columns and arches that once united many block fronts in early Portland, and it is the largest cast-iron commercial building still standing on the West Coast, according to William Hawkins.²⁸ This four-story building (with full basement) exemplifies the Italianate style. The upper three stories are of brick surfaced with stucco with cast-iron and wood ornament bolted to the walls. The principal cast-iron elements in the Blagen Block are the ground floor colonnade and pilasters at the center and sides of the building. The grouping of arches across the façade, two per structural bay, is an unusual feature. There are acanthus leaf decorations, along with stars, stripes, arrows, laurel leaves, and lion heads above the capitals. Female heads of cast iron embellish the fourth floor and pediments below the bracketed roof cornice. The façade generally features long rows of individual window openings, with different styles of arches on each floor, topped by a bracketed cornice, parapet and two projecting pediments identifying the two halves of the building. Under the pediments are the building’s name and date. Alterations include removal of the original storefronts on First Avenue, characterized by tall paired doors between the columns. Following a fire in 1980, the missing cast-iron pilasters on Couch Street were replaced with fiberglass pilasters, and the storefront was restored to its original appearance. Individually listed as a local Historic Landmark in 1970, this building was listed as a “primary landmark” in the 1975 National Register nomination.

Fleischner Building (Norcrest China Co.) (# 54): 115 NW First Avenue (1906). Twentieth-century Romanesque. Edgar Lazarus, architect.

This five-story, red brick structure was designed for retail use. Defining features include inset brickwork around the windows on the fifth floor, where two arched windows are set within a larger arched area. Windows and doorways on the ground floor have segmental brick arches. The roofline projects upward to a central pediment shape and is accentuated by a cast-iron cornice with brackets. Alterations include renovations and signage in the mid-1980s.

- *NW Second Avenue*

Burnside Hotel (Shoreline Hotel) (# 43): 2-12 NW Second Avenue (ca. 1901, 1926). Twentieth-century

²⁷ Inscription on historic plaque at Norton House.

²⁸ Hawkins, *Grand Era of Cast-Iron Architecture*, 152.

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commercial.

The history of this three-story utilitarian brick commercial building is somewhat obscure. The three-story Burnside Hotel was built on the site circa 1901. At the time of the widening of West Burnside in 1925-26, portions of the structure were demolished and the hotel was rebuilt. Permit records indicate that much of the original structure was reused, however a new front was created and the southwest corner of the building was clipped, probably to accommodate a streetcar turn at the intersection of Burnside and Second. The building housed the Burnside Hotel (also variously known as the Burnside Lodging House and Burnside Rooming House) until 1928 when it became the S. P. Hotel under Japanese-American ownership. The plain façade of the red brick is adorned by two belt courses, one above the storefront level and one above the third story. There is a row of decorative brick detail at the cornice. The single windows are slightly recessed, six-over-one wood sash. The storefront level has large windows with transoms, awnings, and a corner entrance. Later changes made to this building include storefront remodels and installation of a fire escape. The classification of this building has been changed from noncontributing to contributing. Its character-defining features are still intact, and changes at the storefront level are considered to be reversible. The building contributes to the sense of place and architectural character of the district.

Erickson's Saloon (Pomona Hotel) (# 31). 5-23 NW Second Avenue (1912). Twentieth-century classical. Aaron H. Gould, architect.

This building, designed as a saloon and hotel, is a through-block building with one portion fronting Second Ave (5 NW Second) and one fronting Third Ave (4-10 NW Third). It is a three-story red brick structure with a metal cornice, consoles, and a balustrade with a grille. Decorations include brickwork at the window sills, a cast-stone belt cornice above the storefronts, and cast-iron columns at the first floor. The interior of this building boasted a 684-foot bar. Card rooms and "cribs" (bedrooms approximately 8' x 10') were on the upper floor. The building was partially rehabilitated in the mid-1980s.

Phillips Hotel (Captain Couch Square, Couch Block Building) (# 41): 14-32 NW Second Avenue (1904, 1913). Commercial. Architect unknown.

This two-story brick building has single and paired segmental-arched windows on the upper floor. Ornamental brick work decorates the cornice. Alterations include modifications to the storefronts.

Skidmore Development Co. (# 42): 32 W/ NW Second Avenue (1913). Commercial. Architect unknown.

This two-story brick building has tripartite windows on the second floor. Ornamental brickwork decorates the cornice. Alterations include utilitarian changes to the storefront, which do not compromise the historic appearance of the building. The classification of this building has been changed from noncontributing to contributing. Its character-defining features are still intact, and changes at the storefront level are considered to be reversible. The building contributes to the sense of place and architectural character of the district.

Couch Street Building (Jazz de Opus Building) (# 30): 27-33 NW Second Avenue (1912). Commercial.

This is a two-story brick building with rectangular windows on the upper floor. Decorative elements include a dentillated cornice, and a belt course divides the two floors. Alterations include removal of the original storefront windows and doors in 1972. New doors and windows have been installed in a style that is not compatible with the building.

Merchant Hotel (# 12, 28): 121-139 NW Second Avenue, 222 NW Davis Street (1880, 1884). High Victorian Italianate. Warren H. Williams, architect (attributed).

The Merchant Hotel (sometimes referred to as the Merchant's Hotel) is the largest High Victorian Italianate

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example remaining in the district. It was constructed for hotel, retail, and office use. It also served as the hub of Portland's Japanese community following World War I.²⁹ The building is of brick construction with a stucco finish and cast iron and wood trim. It was constructed in two parts: the Third Avenue section is four stories and was completed in 1880 and the three-story Second Avenue (at NW Davis) section was completed in 1884. Although it is not known with certainty whether Williams was the architect, the cast-iron pilaster columns feature a design that was used extensively by Williams. Over sixteen feet tall and eighteen inches wide, the columns are embellished by female heads bolted on at the level of the storefront door. Storefront windows are supported by smaller intermediate iron columns, and major upper-floor doorways are emphasized by iron-arched openings. Other decorations include label moldings, keystones, and a cornice above the storefronts. The Willamette Iron Works produced the iron, and its mark appears on several of the pilaster columns and arches. Alterations include removal of the opening facing NW Third and other street-level alterations. The original sheet metal cornice was removed at an unknown date, possibly in the early 1960s when the building was first renovated (fire marshals required the removal of numerous cornices on older buildings throughout the downtown in the 1960s and 1970s). The Second and Third Avenue façades were renovated in the early 2000s, and a seismic upgrade was completed in 2004. Because this building was constructed in two parts it has two addresses and two identification numbers. However, it is considered one resource. This building was listed as a "primary landmark" in the 1975 National Register nomination and individually listed as a local historic landmark in 1970.

- *NW Third Avenue*

Fritz Hotel (Erickson Hotel; Fritz Hotel Annex) (# 18): 4-10 NW Third Avenue (1913). Twentieth-century classical. Aaron H. Gould, architect.

This is a through-block building, with one portion fronting Second Ave. This three-story masonry building was designed as an annex to Erickson's Saloon at 5 NW Second. This building was renovated in 1981. The ground floor was adapted for office use. The ground floor of the west façade was remodeled in 1991 with compatible new storefronts.

Meriweather Hotel (Mission Hotel and Chapel) (# 8): 11-17 NW Third Avenue (1927). Twentieth-century commercial. Drake, Wyman & Voss, architects.

This three-story building is faced with red brick and decorated with patterned brickwork at the cornice level. Below the roofline there is a neon sign reading "Union Gospel Mission." Symmetrical rows of windows at the second and third stories have an arched center window, flanked by rectangular openings. At the storefront level, one arched doorway and two rectangular doorways have simple brick surrounds. No significant alterations were identified, although changes have been made to the lower-level fenestration. This building is located in both Skidmore/Old Town and New Chinatown/Japantown Historic Districts and is also classified as contributing in the New Chinatown/Japantown Historic District.

Glade Hotel (# 17): 14-18 NW Third Avenue (1900). Twentieth-century Romanesque. Architect unknown. This narrow, three-story red brick building is embellished with ornamental brickwork, including an intricate corbelled cornice, quoins, and parapet. Windows at the third story are rectangular, while at the second story paired arched windows are set within a central arch. Alterations include removal of the first floor cornice and other changes at the storefront level.

²⁹ City of Portland, *Historic Resource Inventory*, 1984; City of Portland, Landmark designation file for Merchants Hotel, 120-136 NW Third Avenue.

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Mae Nam Thai Restaurant (# 7): 21-35 NW Third Avenue (1918). Stripped classical. Charles Ertz, architect. No historic name is apparent for this building. However, prior to the 1942 Japanese-American relocation, the building was known at times as the Maehara Hotel and the Matsuma cleaners.³⁰ This one-story brick building is divided into four bays, with ribbon windows and a flush façade. Decorative brickwork in a Modern design accentuates the flat roofline. This property is located in both Skidmore/Old Town and New Chinatown/Japantown Historic Districts.

S. Ban Company Building (Old Town Café; Aldo Rossi Building) (# 14): 26-32 NW Third Avenue (ca. 1894). Richardsonian Romanesque. Architect unknown.

This is a three-story, red brick building with arches and inset windows on the upper two floors. There is brick ornamentation at the roofline. It housed the offices and general store of Shinsaburo Ban, a prominent member of Portland's Japanese-American community and successful businessman and labor-contractor. The upper stories housed a hotel. Alterations include modifications to the storefront level.

Sinnott House (Florence McDonnell Building, Simon Building). 105 NW Third Avenue (1883). High Victorian Italianate. Architect unknown.

The Sinnott House is a three-story brick building with cast-iron elements. It was a common building type and style in its era. Pilasters with cast-iron capitals are of particular interest. Other details include molded wooden and cast-iron ornament. The façade generally features rows of individual window openings, with different styles of arches on each floor, topped by a parapet, bracketed cornice, and two overhanging pediments. It is possible that the cast iron was supplied by the City Foundry, since it is similar to what they produced for other buildings. Significant alterations include masonry infill on the Couch Street storefronts and replacement of the original metal cornice with a wood cornice. Portions of storefronts on Third Street have been glazed. Individually listed as a local historic landmark in 1970, this building was listed as a "primary landmark" in the 1975 National Register nomination. Note: this building is sometimes referred to as the "Simon Building" since it was owned and perhaps built by Portland Mayor and U.S. Senator Joseph Simon, but is not to be confused with the adjacent Simon Building façade (#5), listed next (# 6).

Simon Building Façade (# 5): 105 WI/NW Third Avenue (1892). Richardsonian Romanesque. Pickles & Sutton, architect.

The building was destroyed by fire and the façade is the only remaining part of the building that once occupied this property. Preservation of the façade earned an AIA award. This property is located in both Skidmore/Old Town and New Chinatown/Japantown Historic Districts.

Portland Mariners' Home (New Wah Mei) (# 3): 203-209 NW Third Avenue (1882). Italianate. Justus Krumbein, architect.

This building was constructed by the Portland Seamen's Friend Society to serve as a "Mariners' Home," a lodging house for itinerant sailors. It housed the Portland Hospital for a time circa 1890 and later served as a lodging house/hotel on its upper floors with various retail uses in the storefronts below. Several Japanese-Americans operated businesses in the building from around the turn of the century until 1941. It is a four-story brick building with a stucco finish. The storefronts feature cast-iron bulkheads and columns. Cast-iron corner pilasters rise to the second floor, continuing in stucco on the upper floors. Simple Italianate ornamentation defines the arched upper-story windows. Projecting brick stringcourses articulate each story. Alteration records are incomplete. In 1952, the cornice and balconies on the Davis St. and Third Ave. façades were

³⁰ Notation on a hand-drawn map featured in Arthur Kazuo, *Issei: A History of Japanese Immigration in the Northwest*, 1973 (reproduced in *Burnside: A Community*, by Kathleen Ryan, 25).

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removed. In 1963, the brick parapet was repaired. In 2003, storefront changes improved the appearance of the façade on NW Third and re-used existing cast-iron columns in the façade. This property is located in both the Skidmore/Old Town and New Chinatown/Japantown Historic Districts.

Portland Seamen's Bethel (Hip Sing Association) (# 2). 211-215 NW Third Avenue (ca. 1889 – 1900). Italianate. Justus Krumbein (attributed).

The early history of the building is somewhat obscure. Previous to construction of the existing two-story structure, a narrow, single-story wooden building occupied the northern half of the site, housing the Seamen's Friend Society's "Seamen's Bethel," a kind of religious and social service center for sailors, that included a chapel, free reading room and kitchen. That building was the former Gem Saloon moved by the Society from the northwest corner of First and Stark in 1879. It had been constructed as early as 1857, the date the Gem Saloon began operations and the *Oregonian* referred to it as the "old time Gem Saloon transformed by the Portland Seamen's Friend Society," soon after its relocation. By 1892, the Bethel operation was located in an apparently new wooden building just to the west, on the site now occupied by Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Society building (#1). Spaces in the former Gem Saloon/first Bethel structure (still owned by the Society) were being rented for use as a store, a druggist and a barber, the building having been altered by single-story addition that filled the gap between it and the Mariners' Home (#3) on the Third Street façade, and the demolition of the rear third of the structure. By 1902, a two-story building with the same envelope as the existing structure occupied the site. It is unclear if the previous wooden building had been further altered with the addition of a second floor or if an entirely new building was constructed. It shares the same stylistic features as the adjacent Mariners' Home. Ground-floor cast-iron pilasters continue above the first belt course in a simulated stone pattern to the cornice and terminate at the parapet above. The second floor façade is stucco over brick. Arched windows at the second floor have label moldings. Alterations include storefront remodels in the 1940s and in 1985. In 1947 an iron balcony was constructed. This property is located in both Skidmore/Old Town and New Chinatown/Japantown Historic Districts.³¹

Foster Hotel (Lyndon Musolf Manor, Foster Apartments) (# 11). 216 NW Third Avenue (1911). Commercial. Architect unknown.

The Foster Hotel is a three-story building with beige-colored brick on the upper floors and wood-framed storefronts on the lower level. The upper floors have paired double-hung windows with exposed concrete sills. Ornamentation includes overlapping bands of raised brick detailing at the corners and pediment, and the cornice has a decorative exposed concrete band. Built as a residential hotel, the building originally contained 180 rooms with no private bathrooms. The building housed the offices of the Marine Workers Industrial Union in the 1930s. It also housed Japanese workers and a Judo parlor. Alterations since approximately 1930 are related to the addition of fire escapes, increased accessibility, fire damage, and changes of use. The structure was rehabilitated in 1974. There was some incompatible remodeling at the storefront level. Alterations in 2006 introduced historically compatible improvements at the storefront level, including a new storefront system with aluminum doors and transom windows. Recessed entryways and storefront alcoves were added along the west, south, and east facades. More retail space was incorporated along NW 2nd Ave. At the second and third floors, windows were replaced. A penthouse, new canopies, lighting and signage were also incorporated.

³¹ Portland Seamen's Friend Society Records, 1877-1915, Mss 292, Oregon Historical Society; Seamen's Abuses: Pamphlets, Scrap-Books and Letters [Portland Seamen's Friend Society correspondence], Multnomah County Library, Wilson Rare Book Room, Multnomah, Oregon; "Portland Seamen's Bethel," *Daily Oregonian*, September 13, 1880; Sanborn Maps, 1879, 1889, 1892, 1901, 1908/24. The University of Oregon Library possesses the Portland Seamen's Friend Society's account book for the years 1877 to 1899 (MS No. B93).

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- *NW Couch Street*

Rich Hotel (Rich Block) (# 29): 205 NW Couch Street (1914). Commercial. Architect unknown.

This two-story brick building was constructed on a quarter block as a residential hotel. Brickwork details include a decorated cornice and square arches above the second-story windows. There are numerous storefronts with transom windows. Alterations include storefront modifications.

- *NW Davis Street*

Globe Hotel (Import Plaza) (# 70): 88 NW Davis Street (1911). Commercial. E. B. McNaughton, architect (attributed).

This four-story brick building occupies a quarter of a block and is organized into five bays, with piers defining openings at the lower level. The upper three floors are divided by belt courses and have rectangular, tripartite windows. Other brickwork details include a corbelled cornice. In 1962, the Globe Hotel was converted to Import Plaza. Before its renovation, the Globe sheltered 400 men in cubicles divided by thin wooden walls.³² In 1963, the storefront level was altered.

Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association Building (# 1): 315-317 NW Davis Street (1911). Twentieth-century commercial. D. L. Williams, architect.

This four-story yellow brick building was constructed as a community center and school by the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association. The main entrance is through wrought-iron gates. The third and fourth floors have balconies with wrought iron balustrades and trim. A metal parapet with a quarter-round element in the center rises above a plain cornice. This property is located in both Skidmore/Old Town and New Chinatown/Japantown Historic Districts.

Merchant Hotel (# 12, 28): 222 NW Davis Street (1880, 1884). High Victorian Italianate. Warren H. Williams, architect (attributed).

This building was constructed in two parts and has two addresses and two property identification numbers, however, it is considered one resource. The other address is 121-139 NW Second Avenue. See description under NW Second Avenue for more information. This building was listed as a “primary landmark” in the 1975 National Register nomination.

- *NW Naito Parkway (Front Avenue)*

Bickel Block (White Stag Block) (# 91): 25-33 NW Naito Parkway. (Current street address is 5 NW Front Ave., shared with the Skidmore Block (#72) and the White Stag Building (#92), due to a 2008 lot consolidation. The three buildings are now collectively referred to by the common name White Stag Block) (1883). High Victorian Italianate. Justus Krumbein, architect.

This four-story brick building was built by successful pioneer confectioner and developer Frederick Bickel and was used for many years as a factory and warehouse by the Parke and Lacey Machinery Company. The upper three floors are covered with stucco, and the lower level is substantially altered. The historic part of the building is highly decorated with Venetian-Gothic motifs, including arches and moldings, trefoil and quatrefoil ornamentation, and other leafy decorative elements around narrow arched windows. Pilasters rise two stories to a bracketed minor cornice below the third floor. Decorations above the upper windows continue the Gothic

³² Ryan, *Burnside: A Community*, 31.

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motif. The iron work was made by Architectural Iron Works of San Francisco, the western branch of Daniel Badger's early architectural iron foundry in New York. Several pilasters are exposed at the structural wall divisions and at the corner. Alterations, neglect and fire damaged many of this building's character defining features in the mid-twentieth century. In 1951, the cornice was removed and the parapet walls were lowered to two feet above the roof. In 1958, "wonderstone" was installed at the storefront level and cast-iron columns were concealed behind the wonderstone. In 1972, a fire damaged original wooden storefront elements and interior woodwork and ceiling joists. Beginning in 2006, the Bickel Block and two immediately adjacent buildings, the Skidmore Building and the White Stag Building, were extensively renovated and remodeled for new uses as the University of Oregon's Portland center and as office space. The roof and parapet caps were replaced and skylights added. At the east façade, the non-historic brick façade was removed to reveal the cast iron work on the ground floor. A new cornice was added at the termination of the cast iron work, replicating one that previously existed. Existing entry doors were used as models to recreate a series of doors that once fronted on this façade. At the north façade, a new entry alcove was placed in the existing opening. Windows were inserted into the four "blind" window articulations, and three new openings were created at the upper levels, continuing the first floor window pattern. This building was listed as a "primary landmark" in the 1975 National Register nomination.

White Stag Building (# 92): (Willamette Tent and Awning Building, Hirsch-Weiss Building, White Stag Block). 5 NW Naito Parkway; 67 W. Burnside Street. (The current street address is 5 NW Front Ave., shared with the Skidmore Block (#72) and the Bickel Block (#91), due to a 2008 lot consolidation. The three buildings are now collectively referred to by the common name White Stag Block) (1907). Utilitarian. Architect unknown.

This is a five story, timber-framed concrete commercial building. The building was designed for manufacturing and warehouse use for the Willamette Tent and Awning Company. The Burnside Street and Naito Parkway façades are faced with red brick. The Naito Parkway façade has diamond-shaped medallions where the concrete structure shows through. The Burnside façade has a similar design motif with tile medallions. In 1926, the south façade was remodeled to attach the building to the new Burnside Bridge, and at that time the original storefronts and fenestration were altered. The fifth floor was added in the 1930s. The ground floor of the east façade was remodeled in the 1950s with aluminum storefronts and stuccoed walls. The building was renovated in 1972. The second floor was adapted for office use, while the first and upper floors were retained for warehousing. Beginning in 2006, the White Stag Building and two immediately adjacent buildings, the Skidmore Building and the Bickel Block, were extensively renovated and remodeled for new uses as the University of Oregon's Portland center and as office space. On the White Stag Building, the roof and parapet caps were replaced and skylights added. At the east façade, ground-floor stucco was removed and replaced with a brick and metal-clad wood storefront. The south façade was renovated, both above and under the Burnside Bridge. New egress doors were installed with wrought-iron rolling gates. Some windows were replaced. In areas where large windows had previously replaced historic multi-paned windows, those changes were reversed. The (non-historic) central ground floor bay opening was altered to match the proportion of the others. This building was individually listed as a local Historic Landmark.

West

- *W Burnside Street*

Bates Building (# 56): 101-117 W Burnside Street (1885). Nineteenth-century commercial style. Early records indicate this building was used as a hotel. It is a three-story, utilitarian style, brick commercial

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building. The tripartite windows have one-over-one sash with masonry sills and lintels. There is a bracketed cornice with decorative consoles at the corners. The storefront level has large windows and an arched central entrance. There have been some changes to this building since the 1920s. A 1925 record states the building was altered, and it is likely that several changes were made to accommodate the 1925 construction of the Burnside Bridge and street widening. Other unspecified alterations were made in 1981. In 2003, some windows were replaced. Other alterations over the years include storefront remodels and installation of a fire escape. The classification of this building has been changed from non-contributing to contributing. Its character-defining features are still intact, and changes at the storefront level are considered to be reversible. The building clearly contributes to the sense of place and architectural character of the Skidmore/Old Town Historic District.

Salvation Army Buildings (# 44): 134 W Burnside (1904), and 30-40 SW Second Avenue. Twentieth-century classical style.

This property is divided in two parts, with two distinct buildings on one tax lot: 20-30 SW Second Ave to the south (see description below under SW Second Ave.) and 134 W Burnside to the north.

The building at 134 W Burnside is a four-story, irregular-shaped building surfaced with brick. The upper three floors have single, rectangular sash windows. There is a wide sheet metal cornice with block modillions and a dentil frieze. Alterations include changes at the storefront level. Sanborn maps dated 1908 and 1925 indicate that this building originally had a rectangular plan. It was modified prior to 1925 by clipping the northwest corner. This was possibly to accommodate the radius of a streetcar turn at the intersection of Burnside and SW Second. The classification of these two buildings was changed from non-contributing to contributing. Changes at the storefront level of both buildings, while significant, are reversible. The upper two stories retain their character-defining features. These buildings clearly contribute to the sense of place and architectural character of the district. They also stand as an important visual gateway to the heart of the Skidmore/Old Town Historic District.

Wax Building (United Clothing Company) (# 19): 219-223 W. Burnside Street (1926). Commercial. Harold D. Marsh, architect.

This two-story building was designed for retail use at the lower level, with offices above. Tom Burns ran his famous clock-repair shop and radical book store on the ground floor and a lending library in the basement. At the storefront level, the piers are cast stone, with large plate glass windows between the piers. The second story is brick surfaced with stucco. The pier capitals and the frieze above the storefronts are decorated in low relief.

Southwest

- *SW First Avenue*

Skidmore Fountain (# 75): SW First & Ankeny Street (1888). Classical. Sculptor, Olin J. Warner; J. M. Wells, architect.

The fountain is set within an irregularly shaped plaza cobbled in Belgian block. It consists of an ornate bronze basin eight feet in diameter held aloft by an ionic shaft and two bronze caryatids with classical form and drapery. An octagonal granite pool twenty feet in diameter collects water from above, and lion heads below spout small streams of water into four drinking troughs originally designed for use by horses. Stephen Skidmore, a druggist who arrived in Portland by covered wagon, left \$5,000 in his will for a fountain for men, horses and dogs. His friends raised additional funds to commission a design by Olin Warner. It is inscribed "Good Citizens Are the Riches of a City," a quote from C. E. S. Wood. This fountain is Portland's oldest piece of public art and a gathering spot for visitors. Restoration activities completed in 2005 included refurbishing

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the bronze and granite surfaces and mortar joints, repairing damaged parts of the lion heads, and replacing a water jet. Individually listed as a local Historic Landmark, 1975, the fountain was listed as a “primary landmark” in the 1975 National Register nomination.

Reed Building (# 74): (Skidmore Fountain Building; Packer-Scott Building). 16-28 SW First Avenue (1890). Richardsonian Romanesque. Whidden & Lewis, architects.

Constructed by Simeon Reed as a wholesale warehouse, this four-story building has a rusticated stone base and pilasters on the first floor, with smooth brick pilasters and walls above extending to a copper sheet metal cornice. Pairs of semi-circular arches and paired rectangular windows are set within the pilasters. Ornamental details include lower and upper level stone belt courses, and dentils above the fourth floor windows. There is a marquee at the first floor level. Alterations include addition of a new marquee in 1946, which was replaced in 1986, and aggressive sand-blasting of exterior brick surfaces. A new floor was also added in 1996. A large mural featuring “Packy,” a Portland Zoo elephant, was approved in the early 1990s. In 2007, an extensive renovation and new addition were approved for the building’s transition to new use as the world headquarters for Mercy Corps. Public gallery space and retail and office use will also be incorporated. Proposed changes include removal of a later penthouse addition, along with repairs and renovations on both the exterior and interior. The Packy mural will be removed and new openings cut into the north wall. A four-story interconnected addition will be constructed directly to the east, with storefront bays at the lower level and a new major entry facing Ankeny Plaza. The east elevation of the new addition will face the Willamette River. This project will be completed circa 2008. Individually listed as a local Historic Landmark in 1969, this property has an easement holding with the Historic Preservation League of Oregon. This building was listed as a “primary landmark” in the 1975 National Register nomination.

New Market, South Wing (# 61): (New Market Alley Building; Poppleton Building). 75-83 SW First Avenue (1871). High Victorian Italianate. E. M. Burton, architect (attributed).

This property includes two conjoined structures. A small, two-story brick and cast-iron structure was constructed to cover the alley entrance on the south side of the New Market Theater, with two arches on the street level that allowed access to the alley for incoming and outgoing wagons. This modest building was designed in the Italianate style and was known as the New Market Alley Building. It shares the same cornice as the building to the south, which was constructed in the High Victorian Italianate style. That structure was known as the Poppleton Building after an early tenant, the Poppleton Machine Shop. The New Market, South Wing name was established when the New Market Theater was constructed in 1872. Horizontal iron beams span the openings between the structural bays. The cast-iron corner column (at SW First and Ash) was constructed by connecting two adjoining pilasters. The pilasters rest on cast-iron thresholds pierced below by ventilator openings. There is a single row of tall, arched windows on the second story. These are grouped in threes and have truncated arches crowned by foliated keystones. Ornately detailed iron console brackets support the belt cornice, and a brick dentil pattern marks the bottom of the wooden roof cornice. Other decorative details include scroll work bolted to the iron spandrels above the columns and a brick dentil pattern at the bottom of the wooden roof cornice. The building was rehabilitated at the same time as the New Market Theater in the mid-1980s. Contemporary alterations include a modest third story which is set back from the roofline. Individually listed as a local historic landmark in 1969, this property has an easement holding with the Historic Preservation League of Oregon. This building was listed as a “primary landmark” in the 1975 National Register nomination.

Oregon & Washington Investment and Trnst Co. (# 79): 122 SW First Avenue (1876). Victorian Gothic. Architect unknown.

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This three-story brick and stucco building was built as the local office of a Scottish investment and banking firm. In addition to financial services, the structure housed a weather observation station on its third floor, operated by the U.S. Army Signal Service from 1878 to 1885.³³ The structure is characterized by surface ornamentation including incised carvings of foliated patterns and carved masks, reflecting the building's Scottish associations. There is a mix of tall pointed and round-arched windows. The building was extensively altered in approximately 1950, when the sandstone and cast-iron façade was masked with a wire stucco shell. Round and pointed arch features of the parapet were also removed. In 1991, a rehabilitation project reversed many changes. The project included structural and seismic upgrading, a façade renovation, and the addition of a rooftop penthouse. The storefront and lobby entrance were also reconstructed. Some details, including lost cast and carved details and cast-iron columns, were recreated. The classification of this building was changed from non-contributing to contributing because of extensive rehabilitation. The building now clearly contributes to the sense of place and architectural character of the Skidmore/Old Town Historic District.

208 Building (Portland Machine Company) (# 82): 208-218 SW First Avenue (1895). Commercial. Architect unknown.

This three-story buff colored brick building was constructed for office and retail use. It is distinguished by tripartite windows, a full-length entablature above the storefront level, and a brick dentillated cornice. Alterations were made to the storefronts and interior of this building in the late 1970s and early 1980s. This property has an easement holding with the Historic Preservation League of Oregon.

Seuffert Building (# 83): 220-228 SW First Avenue (1889). High Victorian Italianate. Architect unknown. This two-story brick and cast-iron building was constructed for office and retail use. Cast-iron columns support an upper brick wall with a stucco finish. Decorative elements include finely detailed molding on the window surrounds and a cast-iron cornice and brackets. A centered parapet displays the construction date of the building. On the second floor, the windows narrow and arch. At the storefront level, there are large display windows for the two shops, which were originally divided by cast-iron columns. There is an arched entrance at the center of the building. The storefront level was altered at an unknown date. The building was individually listed as a local historic landmark in 1969. This building was listed as a "primary landmark" in the 1975 National Register nomination.

Apple Music Company Building (# 66): 225 SW First Avenue (1914). Commercial. Architect unknown. This is a one-story masonry building with a stucco surface. The band of storefront windows is organized in a horizontal strip and capped by an awning. The roof is flat, with a modest belt course below the cornice. There is a single entry door with glass blocks at the transom level. Some modifications have been made to the storefront.

Failing Building (Oregon Marine Supply Building) (# 67): 235 SW First Avenue (1886). High Victorian Italianate. Warren H. Williams, architect.

This is one of the few remaining structures by Williams. This three-story masonry and structural iron building was designed for office and warehouse use. The brick walls are finished with stucco in imitation of stone. The regularly spaced individual windows are tall and rectangular. There is a pediment above the second story on the First Avenue façade, and above the third story a bracketed cornice and pedimented parapet adorn the roofline. Decorative details also include cast-plaster garlands above the third story windows. A San Francisco firm, Edward A. Rix & Co., supplied the structural iron girders. A Willamette Iron Works plaque appears on

³³ Gary K. Grice, *History of Weather Observing in Portland, Oregon, 1858-1950* (Mansfield, TX: s.n., 2005), 13-14.

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the large (16' tall and 14'' wide) cast-iron pilasters, which they manufactured. George McMath described the Failing Building as "a happy Victorian melding of French and Italian influences."³⁴ Alterations include changes in 1979 to the ground floor windows. It is individually listed as a local historic landmark and was listed as a "primary landmark" in the 1975 National Register nomination.

George Lawrence Building (# 85): 306-316 SW First Avenue (1903). Second Renaissance Revival. Whidden & Lewis, architects.

This building was constructed by the George Lawrence Company as a saddle and leather goods factory and wholesale facility, its ground floor serving as a sales room and its upper floors as manufacturing and storage space. The company occupied the building until 1985, when it was converted to office uses. It is a symmetrical, four-story brick building with rusticated piers at the ground level. The four floors are organized into distinct horizontal divisions by belt courses. The windows are both paired and single, with large glazed openings on the lower level. The cornice is corbelled and dentillated.

- *SW Second Avenue*

Hohn Hotel (# 33): 9-13 SW Second Avenue (ca. 1890). Commercial. Architect unknown.

This property has two distinct but conjoined structures on one taxlot. Both are three-story brick buildings surfaced with stucco, with streetcar-era storefronts at the lower level and two stories above. The southerly building is narrow, with a bracketed sheet metal cornice, segmental-arched windows and a belt cornice. This building has had some alterations, most likely when Burnside Street was widened in 1926. The northerly building has a simple cornice and rectangular windows with transoms. Alterations also include storefront modifications from the mid-1980s.

Salvation Army Buildings (# 44): 30-40 SW Second Avenue and 134 W Burnside (1904). Twentieth-Century Classical.

This property is divided in two parts, with two distinct buildings on one taxlot: 20-30 SW Second Ave to the south and 134 W Burnside to the north (see description above under Burnside St). The Second Ave. façade is divided into four bays, each topped with a semi-circular metal cornice. On the second story, there are segmental arched windows with surrounds of elaborate dentillated arches emphasized by horizontal band courses. On the Ankeny façade, a wood and metal parapet rises above the third floor and is marked by a crest inscribed with an S. Alterations include infill and other changes to the storefront level, including changes made in 1939 by the J. M. Harder Plumbing and Heating Company. The classification of these two buildings has been changed from non-contributing to contributing. Changes at the storefront level, while significant, are considered to be reversible. The upper two stories retain their character-defining features. The buildings clearly contribute to the sense of place and architectural character of the district. They also stand as an important visual gateway to the heart of the Skidmore/Old Town Historic District.

Western Rooms (# 34): 15-27 SW Second Avenue (1906). Second Renaissance Revival. Architect unknown.

This four-story brick building was constructed for hotel and retail use. It is distinguished by a dentillated cornice and decorative brickwork on the third-floor façade. Alterations at the storefront level include some infill and other changes to accommodate commercial use.

³⁴ Thomas Vaughan and George McMath, *A Century of Portland Architecture* (Portland: Oregon Historical Society, 1967), 53.

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New Market Theater (# 45): 50 SW Second Avenue (1872). High Victorian Italianate. Piper & Burton, architects.

This three-story brick building, constructed as a theater and market, was designed in the grand Venetian palace style. It has a cast-iron front, with columned archways at paired entrance portals and two tiers of arched windows. The windows are separated by brick and iron pilasters. The roof cornice features a pediment and a wooden balustrade. A public market was originally located on the street level, featuring a 200' arcade that passed through the building from First Street to Second, lined with 28 marble produce stalls. This building retains its original east and west façades, except for six cornice urns which were removed and an 1884 remodeling of the theater's east entrances. In the contemporary era, the lower level was used for parking through the 1970s, and many interior features were removed. The building exterior was rehabilitated in the early 1980s, some missing ornament was replaced and internal connections were made with the adjacent New Market Annex and New Market, South Wing. In 1984, salvaged columns from the New Market North Wing (demolished in 1956) were reinstalled in their original positions, extending from New Market Theater at the street edge along SW First (some portions are reproductions molded from original pieces). It was individually listed as a local Historic Landmark in 1969. Recorded in Historic American Building Survey, record HABS OR-51. This building was listed as a "primary landmark" in the 1975 National Register nomination.

New Market Annex (New Market West) (# 46): 58-66 SW Second Avenue (1889). Richardsonian Romanesque. McCaw & Martin, architects.

This five-story building was constructed as a warehouse, forge, and annex to the New Market Theater. It has a rusticated stone base, brick and stone exterior walls, and large arched windows in the brickwork. Window bays are set between structural columns. The stone base incorporates columns topped with loosely worked stone patterns. The building is surmounted by a rough-cut stone belt course and a brick fretwork parapet. Art Nouveau-style decorations and an elaborate wrought-iron fire escape and tie bars, along with an engraved corner sign and flagpole support, embellish the building. The building was renovated in the early 1980s for retail and office use. At that time, windows were added to the blind arcade on the south elevation. Originally owned by former Territorial Governor and Portland Mayor David P. Thompson, it is a fine example of Richardsonian Romanesque architecture. Individually listed as a local Historic Landmark in 1969, this building was listed as a "primary landmark" in the 1975 National Register nomination.

Glisan Building (Chown Electric Co.) (# 48): 112-118 SW Second Avenue (1889). Queen Anne Italianate. Architect unknown.

This two-story brick and cast-iron structure housed a variety of uses, including offices, stores and lodgings. It was the third building on this block to be constructed by Dr. Rodney Glisan, a recognized leader in the field of medicine and prominent Portland business leader (the first was the 1872 Glisan Block, demolished, and the second was the 1879 Phoenix Building, #47). Sanborn Maps show the Townsend Creamery located there in 1901, with a store and "junk" indicated by 1908. It was the last Portland building to incorporate cast-iron pilasters and columns, and it represents a transitional building between the earlier Italianate and the later Richardsonian style. The building has small, arched individual windows on the second floor, divided by brick piers suggesting columns. Large display windows are divided by smaller structural cast-iron columns at the entrances to the two shops. The building has elaborate central pediments at both floors. The second floor arches, the decorative motif of the capitals, the parapet railing and other applied ornament display the curvilinear forms of the emerging Art Nouveau style. The building was rehabilitated in the mid-1980s and seismically upgraded in the 1990s. Individually listed as a local Historic Landmark in 1969. This building was listed as a "primary landmark" in the 1975 National Register nomination.

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Haseltine Building (# 36). 133 SW Second Avenue (1893). Richardsonian Romanesque.

This large, four-story building was constructed as a mercantile building by James E. Haseltine for his firm J. E. Haseltine Co., wholesaler of various goods including hardware, hardwoods and wagon-making materials. The first and second stories are rusticated stone, with stucco-covered brick on the upper two floors. The building is organized into five bays, with groups of three rectangular windows in each bay. Massive round stone arches define the ground floor openings. Decorative details include rusticated stone used in the lintels, window sills, and belt course below the roofline. The parapet was repaired in 1951. In 1980, the building was renovated for commercial use. This building was designated as a local landmark in 1969 and was listed as a "primary landmark" in the 1975 National Register nomination.

- *SW Third Avenue (no contributing resources)*
- *SW Ankeny Street*

Yongg's Marble Works (Salvation Army Building) (# 52): 131 SW Ankeny Street (1880). Brick Utilitarian. Architect unknown.

This two-story brick building originally housed a marble works and has been used as a factory, warehouse, retail establishment, and mission. On the lower level, there are segmental-arched openings with transoms. The upper floor has single, segmentally arched windows, and above that is a pedimented parapet. Alterations to the building include coverage of the primary façade with a stucco finish at an unknown date. Changes were also made to accommodate retail and office uses.

- *SW Ash Street*

Smith Block (#95): 10 SW Ash Street (1872). Italianate. W. W. Piper, architect.

This is one part of the Smith Block, which also includes 111-113 SW Naito Parkway and 112-118 SW First Avenue (# 96, 78) described below. This address is the northernmost corner of the block, fronting on SW Ash and Naito Pkwy. The Smith Block is comprised of two buildings, originally contiguous and two stories tall, occupying a one-half block and fronting on First Avenue, Ash Street, and Naito Parkway. They were constructed as rental mercantile buildings and were divided into 25' bays with a light court at center. Both structures have cast-iron elements on the lower level, including columns and arches between rusticated pilasters. The arches feature keystones and spandrel decorations topped by a bracketed wood cornice. This type of arcade was common in Portland in the 1870s and 1880s. The buildings retain their original second-story sash, which are tall and narrow with round arches. The four-bay Naito Parkway façade has an arched parapet inscribed with the name and date of construction. Originally the ground floor windows on this façade were folding doors that could be opened to accommodate shoppers. Alterations to the original two-story building included the insertion of two additional floors within the building envelope. Remodeling efforts dating to the 1940s included removal of some of the wood cornices and alteration of the street-level façades. The northwest corner of the building (at SW First and Ash) was removed in 1955 for a parking lot. In the early 1960s, the northeast corner of the building was restored, and a new entry was added on Ash Street in 1962. Beginning in 1978, additional restoration efforts included altering the façade to match the character of the original building and installing columns and caps cast from cast-iron elements on adjacent unaltered portions of the building. In 2007, additional renovation work began on the other parts of the block, including tenant improvements for new restaurant and retail uses on the ground floor and offices on the upper three floors. The Smith Block was individually listed as a local historic landmark in 1969 and was listed as a "primary landmark" in the 1975 National Register nomination.

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Phoenix Building (Portland Railway Company) (# 47): 124 SW Ash Street (1879). Italianate.

This two-story brick building was constructed by Rodney Glisan, who later constructed the adjacent Glisan Building in 1889 (#48). It appears to have initially housed plumbing businesses and offices, possibly with lodgings above. The Povey Brothers Art Glass Works was located in a portion of the building by 1889. Around the turn of the century it once again housed a plumbing operation as well as the Pacific Coast Rubber Co. with offices and lodgings on the second floor. At one point, it may have contained offices associated with the Portland Railway Co. and the Portland Railway, Light & Power Co. The structure has cast-iron features including columns, piers, and window details. These elements are more evident on the Ash Street façade, with more iron features removed or obscured on the Second Street façade. Single windows on the upper floor are tall and rectangular. Alterations include removal of the cornice and some of the cast-iron elements. The building was also surfaced with stucco, and there have been storefront modifications.

Bickel Building (Wachsmuth Building) (# 23): 223-225 SW Ash Street (1892). Italianate. Architect unknown.

The two-story building was constructed for office use by Frederick Bickel. It is a dark red brick building with wood trim, a flat roof with pediments, and pressed metal trim work at the cornice line, including brackets and finials. The individual windows are tall and segmentally arched. Alterations include repairs from a fire in 1926, including replacement of windows, doors, and floors. Some storefront openings have been partially infilled. The Portland City Council met here for two years until the completion of City Hall in 1894. The Oregon Oyster Company, still located at this building, took up residence in 1915. Individually listed as a local historic landmark in 1969, this building was listed as a "primary landmark" in the 1975 National Register nomination.

- *SW Naito Parkway (Front Avenue)*

Smith Block (# 95), 111-117 SW Naito Parkway and **Railway Building (# 96, 78):** 112-118 SW First Avenue (1872). Italianate. W. W. Piper, architect.

This building is part of the Smith Block, which also includes 10 SW Ash Street as described above. The Smith Block is comprised of two buildings, originally contiguous and two stories tall, occupying a one-half block and fronting on First Avenue, Ash Street, and Naito Parkway. They were constructed as rental mercantile buildings and were divided into 25' bays with a light court at center. Both structures have cast-iron elements on the lower level, including columns and arches between rusticated pilasters. The arches feature keystones and spandrel decorations topped by a bracketed wood cornice. This type of arcade was common in Portland in the 1870s and 1880s. The buildings retain their original second-story sash, which are tall and narrow with round arches. The four-bay Naito Parkway façade has an arched parapet inscribed with the name and date of construction. Originally the ground floor windows on this façade were folding doors that could be opened to accommodate shoppers. Alterations to the original two-story building included the insertion of two additional floors within the building envelope. Remodeling efforts dating to the 1940s included removal of some of the wood cornices and alteration of the street-level façades. The northwest corner of the building (at SW First and Ash) was removed in 1955 for a parking lot. In the early 1960s, the northeast corner of the building was restored, and a new entry was added on Ash Street in 1962. Beginning in 1978, additional restoration efforts included altering the façade to match the character of the original building and installing columns and caps cast from cast-iron elements on adjacent unaltered portions of the building. In 2007, additional renovation work began on the block as part of tenant improvements for new restaurant and retail uses on the ground floor and offices on the upper three floors. The storefront on the southernmost bay 111 was rebuilt to match the original wood

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storefronts on adjacent bays 113 and 117. ADA access accommodations included relocating two iron stoops on northern bays 113 and 117 to the rebuilt bay 111 storefront. Windows on the south façade were replaced with historically compatible wood windows. A penthouse was installed for mechanical equipment, and structural improvements were made. The Smith Block was individually listed as a local historic landmark in 1969 and was listed as a “primary landmark” in the 1975 National Register nomination.

Fechheimer & White Building (# 98): 233 SW Naito Parkway (1870). High Victorian Italianate. Williams & Krumbain, architects.

This two-story masonry structure was constructed for retail and office use. It represents development typical of the 1870s, when a considerable number of fanciful, well designed cast-iron structures were constructed, both large and small. The building sits on a granite base, with cast-iron arches and Corinthian columns on the first floor and elaborate stucco masonry on the second floor. Tall, narrow windows on the second floor are round arched with elaborate crowns. The bracketed cornice is capped by a pedimented parapet. The early architectural unity of Portland’s streets was due in part to the use of similar columns and arches on both full block structures and buildings as narrow as 25’. The Fechheimer & White Building was one such narrow building. The arches on this structure are the same as those on larger buildings. They span six feet five inches and were cast in one piece, which was a technical feat. Another unusual feature is that all the iron work rests on a granite threshold rather than an iron threshold. The iron was provided by Willamette Iron Works, whose plate is still visible on the lower part of the right front pilaster. The original design included three pairs of doors on the first floor, later replaced by a center door and two display windows. In 1962, the building was restored, then refurbished in 1980. In 1990 the door on the Oak Street side was refurbished. Individually listed as a local Historic Landmark in 1970, this building was listed as a “primary landmark” in the 1975 National Register nomination.

Hallock & McMillen Building (# 99): 237 SW Naito Parkway (1857). Italianate. Absalam B. Hallock, architect.

The Hallock & McMillen (or McMillan) Building is the city’s oldest surviving brick commercial structure, and for that reason, is significant both within the district and the city as a whole. It was constructed by Portland’s first architect, who partnered with William McMillen (a.k.a. McMillan), a contractor. The two-story building was constructed in 1857 at the corner of SW Front and Oak streets. Alteration records are incomplete, however, based on an early engraving and photographs, the Naito Parkway façade was substantially altered. In the 1940s, four cast-iron columns were removed on the Naito Parkway façade. The Oak Street façade retains some of its original appearance. This building was listed as a “primary landmark” in the 1975 National Register nomination.

- *SW Oak Street*

DeIschneider Building (# 90): 71 SW Oak Street (1859). Italianate. Architect unknown.

This narrow brick building, constructed in 1859, is the second oldest existing building in the district after the Hallock and McMillen Building of 1857. It was first used as a factory by the Novelty Iron and Brass Works. The building was originally two stories tall, with a third story added in 1876. The primary façade has rows of three narrow, rectangular windows on the second and third floors, with larger display windows at the storefront level. The third floor façade is similar to the second, except that bracketed window cornices were tin rather than wood, and the brackets and moldings were slightly different in shape. Today, the Italianate façade is close to its original appearance after completion of the third story. The original façade had tall paired doors instead of shop fronts. Some of these features still remained when the building was remodeled but were removed and

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replaced with glazing at the storefront level. This occurred in the early 1990s. A window was also added in the east wall at ground level. Individually listed as a local historic landmark in 1969, this building was listed as a “primary landmark” in the 1975 National Register nomination.

Freimann Kitchen Building (# 89): 79 SW Oak Street (1884). Commercial. P. H. Schulderman, builder. This one-story brick building features a typical 1880s commercial storefront, with a central entry flanked by two storefront windows and thin, plain columns. Above the storefront windows there is a brick frieze extending to the parapet. Brick piers at both ends of the primary façade have capitals extending above the parapet. The building was constructed with the adjacent Freimann Restaurant Building (#84) as a single, architecturally unified and internally-connected unit. Previous alterations include replacement of the windows and doors in 1974. In 2002, the façade was restored to its original appearance. The classification of this building was changed from non-contributing to contributing because of extensive restoration and rehabilitation. The building now communicates its architectural continuity with the Freimann Restaurant Building and clearly contributes to the sense of place and architectural character of the Skidmore/Old Town Historic District.

- *SW Pine Street*

106-116 SW Pine Street (# 65): (1915). Commercial, Architect unknown.

This one-story commercial building occupies a quarter block with multiple storefronts around two sides of the building. It is brick with a stucco surface below the roofline. The roof is flat, with a modest belt course below the cornice. The large storefront windows have transoms and are capped by awnings.

United Carriage and Baggage Transfer Co. (Old Spaghetti Factory) (# 49): 133 SW Pine Street (1875). Italianate. Architect unknown.

This three-story brick building was constructed as a livery by the United Carriage and Baggage Transfer Co. which occupied the structure until the mid-1890s, after which it was occupied by Mitchell, Lewis & Staver Co., sellers of vehicles and machinery. Around the turn of the century the American Steel and Wire Co. was located there, as well as the J. McCracken Co., commission agents and suppliers of storage facilities and building materials. From 1908 to 1968 it was occupied by the F. B. Mallory Logging Equipment Co. It has a stucco finish, wood trim, and segmental brick arches over round-arched windows. A bracketed cornice and pediment define the roofline. Two arches at the lower level are large enough to accommodate a high or wide vehicle; one on Second Street and the other on Pine. Alteration records for this building are incomplete. In 1969, the building lost its livery character with an interior alteration. In 1985, the doorway was remodeled. Individually listed as a local historic landmark in 1969, this building was listed as a “primary landmark” in the 1975 National Register nomination.

Porter Hotel (# 27): 221-227 SW Pine Street (1898). Second Renaissance Revival. Architect unknown.

This three-story brick building was constructed as a hotel, with four bays on Pine Street and two bays on Third Avenue. There is brick detailing at the corners of the building in imitation of quoins. Other brick details include a cornice with dentils and spandrels below the second-story windows.

LIST OF NONCONTRIBUTING RESOURCES

The 44 properties listed below are classified as noncontributing. In three instances, properties have been reclassified (from their *most recent* previous classifications) to noncontributing because their construction date is outside the period of significance established for the district under this nomination. See the introduction to

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the preceding "List of Contributing Resources" for more information on the determinations of contributing status in this updated nomination.

The resources are grouped into three sections: Northwest; West (Burnside Street); and Southwest, and are listed by street (numbered streets preceding named streets) in ascending order of street number. A map accompanying this document identifies the properties by their inventory numbers, which are listed at the end of the property descriptions (for example, # 40). A table of all district resources organized by inventory number is also appended to facilitate locating individual structures.

Northwest

- ***NW First Avenue***

115 N/ NW First Avenue (# 53): Noncontributing, vacant.

- ***NW Second Avenue***

110N/ NW Second Avenue (# 39): Noncontributing, vacant.

Oregon Leather Company (# 40): 110 NW Second Avenue (ca. 1900). Architect unknown.

This two-story commercial building occupies a quarter block. It was used in the early 1900s by the Mt. Hood Factory for producing shirts and overalls, and also as a laundry. It later housed a Greek grocery. The building was adapted over time for other uses, and incompatible changes were made over the years, including filling the original freight entrance with concrete block, replacing windows, and surfacing the exterior to conceal architectural features. Noncontributing due to alterations.

134 NW Second Avenue (# 38): Noncontributing, vacant.

220 NW Second Avenue (# 37): Noncontributing due to date of construction (1984).

- ***NW Third Avenue***

1-3 NW Third Avenue and 7-9 NW Third Avenue (# 10, 9): Noncontributing due to date of construction. A new five-story mixed-use Union Gospel Mission building occupies this site, formerly occupied by a structure which received a demolition permit in 2003. The old Union Gospel Mission represents the only contributing structure demolished since the district's listing in 1975 (2008).

20 NW Third Avenue (# 16): Noncontributing due to date of construction (1938).

22 NW Third Avenue (# 15): Noncontributing due to date of construction (1938).

119-139 NW Third Avenue (# 4): Noncontributing due to alterations (1920).

- ***NW Couch Street***

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Estate Hotel (#13): 225 NW Couch Street, (1914) Commercial. Architect unknown.

This brick building was constructed as a hotel and housed retail operations on its ground floor, including a Greek grocery in the early twentieth century. It is six (originally four) stories tall, with a flat roof and is organized into six bays on both street-facing façades. Alterations include storefront remodels, the earliest of which were not compatible with the character of the building. In 1988, the storefronts and cornice were restored, along with other improvements. In 2006 a major rehabilitation added two stories to the building, an alteration that is considered incompatible with the building's historic character. Other renovations included rehabilitation of the brick façade, a full seismic upgrade, and a new storefront system.

- *NW Davis Street*

33 NW Davis (# 68): Noncontributing due to date of construction (1989).

60 NW Davis (# 69): Noncontributing due to date of construction (1967).

West

- *W Burnside Street*

First & W Burnside (# 57): Noncontributing due to date of construction.

108 W Burnside (# 59): Noncontributing, vacant.

108 W Burnside (# 58): Noncontributing due to alterations (1890).

118-124 W Burnside (# 51): Noncontributing, vacant.

201-217 W Burnside (# 32): Noncontributing due to alterations (1926).

222-224 W Burnside (# 20): Noncontributing due to alterations (1926).

- *NW Naito Parkway (Front Avenue)*

Tom McCall Waterfront Park (# 101): (mid-1970s).

This 4.5 acre urban park is adjacent to the Willamette River. It is a linear strip of open space that runs from the northern to the southern boundary of the district along its easterly edge. This waterfront area was once lined with dozens of buildings, which were demolished beginning in 1939 for civic improvements. Waterfront Park was created following the decision in 1974 to remove Harbor Drive. The park now includes a bicycle and pedestrian path, trees, grassy areas, and two memorial parks. The Japanese-American Historical Plaza was dedicated in 1990. It is defined by trees and a curving wall of large inscribed memorial stones along the Willamette River esplanade. Another war memorial is located further south along the waterfront, at the southern edge of the district. It is the Battleship Oregon Memorial Marine Park, a small (7,000' square foot) park that was dedicated in 1976 as part of the Bicentennial. The focus of the park is the mast from the battleship, which was given to the City of Portland in 1943. The park is classified as noncontributing due to age.

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The park includes a public building, the **Ankeny Pump Station**, immediately south of the Burnside Bridge at the edge of the Willamette River. This facility was constructed in 1929 as part of the seawall and sewer interceptor construction project. The seawall and sewer project marks the end of the historic period of significance of Skidmore/Old Town and represents the beginning of a new and difficult era for district. Therefore, because it is not associated with the district's areas of significance, the pump station is classified as noncontributing.

In 2007, several alterations and public improvements were projected for construction in three phases in the Waterfront Park area, as follows; during the first phase added an event platform and shelter; a circular plaza with a water feature; a seawall overlook; and improvements to Ankeny Pump Station, including ornamental fencing. In the second phase, constructing a restroom; and in the final phase, extending the dock pier and constructing a floating dock into the Willamette River.

White Stag Sign (# 93): 5 NW Naito Parkway (1940). Neon and Bulb Lighting. Ramsey Sign Company. This sign is neon and bulb lighting in an angle-iron frame. The sign was originally constructed by the Ramsey Sign Company as an advertisement for White Satin Sugar, and it was altered in 1950 to include animation. In 1959, it was converted to its existing form for the White Stag Company and in recent years the wording was changed to "Made in Oregon," retaining the original neon-lit outlines of the state of Oregon. The sign was not identified or evaluated as an individual resource in the 1975 National Register nomination and was assigned a contributing classification at a subsequent date. The classification of this object has been changed from contributing to non-contributing due to the date of construction, which is outside the district's period of significance. However, this resource retains its designation as a local Historic Landmark.

Southwest

- *SW First Avenue*

16 WI/ SW First Avenue (# 88): Noncontributing, vacant.

25 SW First Avenue (# 60): Noncontributing, vacant.

28 WI/ SW First Avenue (# 87): Noncontributing, vacant.

28 SW First Avenue (# 86): Noncontributing due to date of construction (1969).

118 N/ SW First Avenue (# 77): Noncontributing, vacant.

Freimann Restaurant Building (# 84): 240 SW First Avenue (1884, 2006). Commercial. P. H. Schulderman, builder.

Constructed with the adjacent Freimann Kitchen Building (#89) as a single, architecturally unified and internally connected unit, this single-story red brick building originally served as a restaurant. Its two façades are each organized into three bays, divided by brick piers with capitals extending above the parapet. The bays on the primary west façade feature large storefront windows divided by plain slender columns and with transom lights above. On the south façade, the westernmost bay contains a similar storefront arrangement, the middle bay is unbroken brick, and the eastern bay is pierced by a narrow, arched side entrance. A brick frieze below

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the parapet runs the length of both façades and continues on the adjoining Freimann Kitchen Building. The building's primary entrance is located at the corner in a recessed 45 degree cut-away supported by a single column.

Most of the building's historic features were hidden or damaged by a 1951 remodel when both faces were obscured by Roman brick veneer. In 2006, an extensive rehabilitation project supervised by architect William Hawkins removed the Roman brick and restored the building's historic appearance. The project was guided by an 1889 woodcut of the exterior and architectural evidence discovered on the building, although no historical photographs or original building plans were located. In addition, local seismic regulations required new reinforcing that necessitated deconstruction of the original brick walls and columns (although they were reassembled using the original bricks) and the new storefront windows in the westernmost bay of the south façade appear not to have been a feature of the original building. Because of these factors, the structure is classified as noncontributing. However, historic features and materials have been retained or reused where possible, and most recreated elements were based on building-specific architectural and historical research, for example the fiberglass corner column replicated to match the previously obscured but decayed original wooden column. Although it cannot be classified as contributing under National Register standards, the building now better communicates its architectural unity and historical associations with the Freimann Kitchen Building and supports the historical scale, feeling, and architectural character of the district.³⁵

SW First Avenue at W Burnside (#73): Noncontributing, vacant.

- *SW Second Avenue*

133 N/ SW Second Avenue (# 35): Noncontributing, vacant.

230 SW Second Avenue (# 50): Noncontributing, vacant.

- *SW Third Avenue*

Paris Theater (# 21): 6 SW Third Avenue (1930). Mediterranean. Francis Jacobberger, architect.

The basic structure of this building is believed to date from 1890. Under various names (Star Theater, Gaiety Theater, Storefront Theater), it hosted vaudeville acts, "exotic dance," and other popular entertainment over most of its life. It was substantially remodeled in 1930, when a 20' section was sheared from the west façade due to widening of SW Third Avenue. Elements of the façade were reused in the 1930 remodeling, including metal sash windows, medallions, and possibly the tile roof.³⁶ In 1976, the structure was classified as noncompatible in the Skidmore/Old Town Historic District. In 1978, that classification was upgraded to compatible by the Historic Landmarks Commission.³⁷ In 1991, façade improvements included restoration of columns to the approximate design of the 1920s plan and a new ticket booth. The present façade is surfaced with stucco. There is a bracketed red tile roof and round-arch openings at the entrance. A projecting sign with "Paris Theater" sits at the roof level above the marquee. It has been reclassified as noncontributing due to the date of alterations that define its contemporary character, which is outside the district's period of significance.

³⁵ Heritage Consulting Group, "Historic Preservation Certification Application, Freimann Building, 240 SW 1st Avenue/79 SW Oak Street, Portland, Oregon," [ca. early 2007]; John W. Russell, "RE: Status of 240 SW First Avenue and 79 SW Oak," memorandum to Nicholas T. Starin, 8/1/2007.

³⁶ William J. Hawkins III, letter to Jerry Brock, Portland Historic Landmarks Commission, August 9, 1991.

³⁷ City of Portland, Historic Landmarks Commission, Minutes, November 8, 1978.

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10-26 SW Third Avenue (# 22): Commercial (1908).

This is a two-story red brick structure with relieving arches over single windows on the second floor. Its uses have included retail, lodging, offices, and theater. The original cornice was removed, and the ground floor was significantly altered on SW Third and Ankeny Street. Noncontributing due to alterations.

108 SW Third Avenue (# 24): Noncontributing, vacant.

122 SW Third Avenue (# 25): Commercial. Architect unknown (1902).

The storefront façade of this building was altered considerably with the addition of larger windows and a new entrance. These areas are outlined by brick in a contrasting color. This building does not convey its original historic storefront character. The addition of newer style features conveys a false historic appearance and confuses the date and style of construction. Noncontributing due to alterations.

128 SW Third Avenue (# 26): Noncontributing due to alterations (1915).

- *SW Ankeny Street*

SW Ankeny & Front (# 94): Noncontributing, vacant.

- *SW Naito Parkway (Front Avenue)*

Tom McCall Waterfront Park (# 101): See above description under NW Naito Parkway. Noncontributing due to date of construction (mid-1970s).

Fire Station #1 & Fire Musenn (# 76): 65 SW Naito Parkway (1952). Modern. This structure was erroneously classified as contributing at some time subsequent to the 1975 National Register nomination. It has been reclassified as noncontributing due to date of construction and style.

131 SW Naito Parkway (# 80): Noncontributing, vacant.

221 SW Naito Parkway (# 97): Noncontributing, vacant.

- *SW Pine Street*

50 SW Pine Street (# 81): Noncontributing due to date of construction (1983).

- *No Street Address*

N/A. Noncontributing, vacant (# 62).

N/A. Noncontributing, vacant (# 63).

N/A. Noncontributing, vacant (# 64).

N/A. Noncontributing, vacant (# 100).

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8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

Nationally: X Statewide: Locally:

Applicable National

Register Criteria: A X B C X D

Criteria Considerations

(Exceptions): A B C D E F G

NHL Criteria:

1, 4

NHL Theme(s):

I. Peopling Places

3. migrations from outside and within

4. community and neighborhood

III. Expressing Cultural Values

5. architecture, landscape architecture, and urban design

6. popular and traditional culture

V. Developing the American Economy

3. transportation and communication

4. workers and work culture

6. exchange and trade

Areas of Significance:

Architecture, Commerce, Entertainment/Recreation, Exploration/Settlement, Maritime History, Social History, Transportation

Period(s) of Significance:

1857-1929

Significant Dates:

N/A

Significant Person(s):

N/A

Cultural Affiliation:

N/A

Architects/Builders:

E. M. Burton, Architect; Charles Ertz, Architect; Aaron H. Gould, Absalom B. Hallock, Architects; Justus Krumbein, Architect; Edgar Lazarus, Architect; Architect; Ion Lewis, Architect; Harold D. Marsh, Architect; McCaw & Martin, Architects; E. B. McNaughton, Architect; Pickles & Sutton, Architects; W. W. Piper, Architect; Piper & Burton, Architects; P. H. Schulderman, Builder; Olin J. Warner, Sculptor; J. M. Wells, Architect; D. L. Williams, Architect; Warren Williams, Architect; William Marcy Whidden, Architect; Whidden & Lewis, Architects.

Historic Contexts:

XVI. Architecture

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G. Renaissance Revival (1830-1920)

3. Cast Iron: Gothic, Romanesque, Renaissance

XII. Business

D. Trade

1. Import-Export

2. Wholesale

E. Finance and Banking

1. Commercial Banks

9. General Finance

L. Shipping and Transportation

XXX. American Ways of Life

D. Urban Life

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State Significance of Property, and Justify Criteria, Criteria Considerations, and Areas and Periods of Significance Noted Above.**INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANCE**

Portland's Skidmore-Old Town marks the site where the city started and then flourished. It contains buildings in a variety of high Victorian styles, many made of cast iron, comprising one of the most impressive commercial blocks (sic) on the west coast.

-“Skidmore/Old Town Historic District,” National Historic Landmark Nomination, 1977

Portland's Skidmore/Old Town Historic District is nationally significant under National Historic Landmark Criterion 1 for its historical associations with the early development and economic growth of the Pacific Northwest's most important urban center of the last half of the nineteenth century. Portland's pioneer merchant-entrepreneurs, speculating and capitalizing on the city's strategic location at the head of ocean-going navigation on the Willamette River and its connection to the greater Columbia River system, transformed it from a stump-strewn clearing to the cultural, financial, trade and transportation hub of the Pacific Northwest—second only to San Francisco as a “metropolis” of the Far West. Its mercantile houses, commission agents, steamship companies and financial institutions, clustered along Front and First streets in and near the present Skidmore/Old Town Historic District, supplied the goods, services and trade connections that not only supported the development of western Oregon, but that of the greater Pacific Slope region. Skidmore/Old Town's historic commercial buildings memorialize Portland's position as a commercial entrepôt that linked a large dependant hinterland to national and global economic systems, and highlight the sometimes under-emphasized role of key urban centers in facilitating the settlement and development of the western United States. The district also served as a major West Coast locus for the provision of important “social services” and related urban functions oriented to the working classes and in some cases ethnic minority groups, including: lodging for itinerant workers, sailors, and loggers; union halls; reading rooms; missions and chapels; ethnic publishing houses; and various popular entertainment and vice venues like saloons, gambling halls, burlesque houses, and brothels. Finally, Skidmore/Old Town's late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century transition from commercial core to Skid Road—an association it has yet to fully shed—exemplifies the changes in urban spatial organization seen in port cities across the nation whereby central business districts and high-status residential areas migrated away from historic waterfront areas which subsequently suffered from neglect, disinvestment, and loss of historic fabric through public “improvement” projects.

The 1857 erection of the brick and cast-iron Hallock and McMillen Building, the earliest surviving structure in the district and the second-oldest building on its original site in the city, marks the beginning of Skidmore/Old Town's period of significance. Over the next three decades, Portland solidified its position as the primary urban center of the Northwest, built on the foundation of its trade-centered economy. As a part of the city's commercial core along and near the Willamette River highway, Skidmore/Old Town was central to this role.

However, beginning slowly in the late nineteenth century and accelerating in the early twentieth century, growth steered away from the Skidmore/Old Town area, and neglect set in for the city's earliest commercial district, with its old-fashioned buildings and its increasingly gritty, flood-prone waterfront location. The status of the area declined and its mix of businesses and building uses changed, as Portland's central business district shifted to the south and west. In the late 1920s, and continuing into the 1970s, a wave of large-scale public works projects and accompanying building demolitions significantly altered the physical and economic fabric

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of the district. The first of these was the completion in 1926 of the new Burnside Bridge and the related widening of West Burnside Street. This resulted in the removal of significant portions of the district's Burnside-facing buildings and turned the street into a major auto arterial that bisected the district and complicated access to its businesses. This intervention was followed in 1929 by the construction of a seawall and sewer interceptor along the Willamette River. Marking the end of the period of significance, this major infrastructure project necessitated the removal of most of Front Street's by-then decaying wharves—structures once central to the city's economic vitality and civic identity—a clear expression of the district's shift away from a maritime orientation. Dozens more cast-iron buildings were removed in the 1940s to allow for the construction of the Harbor Drive freeway.

In the late twentieth century, however, public sentiment began to shift as the economic and cultural significance of the district's historic structures became better understood and valued. Concerted advocacy, policy initiatives and public and private investment arrested the demolition trend and inaugurated a still-continuing era of preservation, renovation and rehabilitation. While many resources have been lost, a significant and cohesive collection of historic structures remain. Together, they remind us not only of a "grand era" of commercial architecture, but of the critical role Portland played as a regional metropolis—a financial, mercantile and transportation hub integral to the settlement and growth of the greater Pacific Slope.

The district is equally significant under National Historic Landmark Criterion 4 for the exceptional architectural values of its mid- and late-nineteenth-century cast-iron commercial buildings—one of the finest collections in the nation and perhaps the most outstanding in the Far West. These two- to four-story, primarily Italianate structures work in concert with sympathetically scaled and designed late nineteenth-century Richardsonian Romanesque and early twentieth-century buildings to define the rich urban character that marks it as a national treasure. With elaborate decorative elements echoing Italian Renaissance designs, Skidmore/Old Town's "Commercial Palaces" notably contribute to Portland's architectural distinctiveness and collectively reflect both the economic success of its early businesses, and the high cultural aspirations of its citizens and leaders.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT AND SIGNIFICANCE

Chinookans, Furs and Forts: the Lower Columbia Region to 1840

For centuries prior to first contact with Europeans and Americans, Chinookan-speaking peoples, including the Clackamas and the Multnomah, and the Kalapuyan-speaking Tualatin, inhabited the lower Columbia basin in the vicinity of the area now known as Portland. Chinookans inhabited both sides of the Columbia with villages, camps, resource areas, and trade routes located along portions of the lower Willamette. A large population resided seasonally on Sauvie Island, at the Willamette's mouth, where Lewis and Clark reported encountering 2,400 individuals living in 1806.³⁸ Chinookan societies relied on the bounty of the region's temperate climate, rich forests and plains, and extensive river systems. Important staples included salmon and wappato, a nutritious root. Cedar trees offered basic material for products such as clothing, water craft, and large plank lodges. Active trade networks were maintained among the inland, valley and coastal cultures of the area.³⁹

European exploration in the Northwest began in the sixteenth-century with the tentative approaches of Spanish and British navigators along the Pacific coast. With the 1792 sighting of the Columbia River by the American Robert Gray, a centuries-long search for a great western waterway that promised significant economic benefits

³⁸ Carl Abbott, *Portland: Gateway to the Northwest* (Northridge, CA: Windsor Publications, 1985), 9.

³⁹ Gordon DeMarco, *A Short History of Portland* (San Francisco: Lexicos, 1990), 8.

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was rewarded. Fourteen years later, William Clark became the first European-American to sight the mouth of the Willamette, almost 100 miles up the Columbia. Clark's exploration of the river took him as far south as the bluff bearing today's University of Portland.⁴⁰

The first forty years of the nineteenth century in the greater Columbia River region were marked by the rise of a prosperous fur trade, Christian missionary activity, the devastation of native societies, and the beginnings of permanent European-American settlement. The Hudson Bay Company's Fort Vancouver, founded at the confluence of the Columbia and the Willamette in the 1820s, was the Columbia region's most important European outpost and trade center, and served as the first "metropolis of Northwest."⁴¹ The fort was the nerve center for the Columbia fur trade and served as a locus for the exchange of goods and information among and between Europeans, Canadians, Americans and American Indians. While the Hudson Bay Company was averse to agricultural and urban settlement of the Oregon Country, which it felt was incompatible with the fur trade, Fort Vancouver and its Chief Factor John McLoughlin would provide critical respite, provisions, and information to the earliest waves of American settlers, who emerged exhausted, bewildered and occasionally starving from their continental treks.

Settling the Valley and the Birth of Portland, 1840 - 1851

Diseases such as small pox and influenza, introduced by early European contact and transmitted along trade routes, killed vast portions of the Northwest's indigenous population by the late 1830s, devastating Chinookan societies. With an estimated 50 to 90 percent reduction of the indigenous population in the Lower Columbia region, White settlers found little of the native resistance encountered by their counterparts in other parts of the continent when major settlement of the Willamette Valley began in the early 1840s.⁴² Encouraged by prospects of "free" land, new markets and the emerging ideology of "Manifest Destiny," pioneers poured into the Oregon Territory, drawn especially to the fertile Willamette Valley. The first land claimed by settlers was generally easily accessible by water, including the Willamette, Tualatin and Yamhill Rivers, in a settlement pattern not uncommon during pre-railroad era western expansion. By 1843, the most significant settlement hugging the lower stretch of the Willamette was Oregon City, 30 miles south of the river's mouth. What would become Portland was merely a glade used by Indians and trappers for respite and trade known as the "The Clearing."⁴³

But the potential of the future townsite, relatively free of all-too-common riverside swamps and with plentiful timber for construction, soon caught the attention of speculators. As early as 1840, Massachusetts sea captain John Couch logged an encouraging assessment of the river's depth adjacent to The Clearing, noting its promise of accommodating large crafts—a pivotal element in the future city's early growth. Three years later, William Overton, an 1841 pioneer from Tennessee, established a 640 acre claim at the site, sharing it with 1842 pioneer Asa Lovejoy in order to cover the 30-cent filing fee. The claim included the southern portion of the present-day Skidmore/Old Town Historic District. The following year, a destitute Overton bartered his half of the claim to Oregon City merchant Francis Pettygrove for \$50 worth of provisions to resettle in California.

In 1844 Maine-born Pettygrove and Lovejoy set up a log-built warehouse/wharf/store at the foot of present-day

⁴⁰ Abbott, *Portland: Gateway*, 8.

⁴¹ Dorothy O. Johanson and Charles M. Gates, *Empire of the Columbia: A History of the Pacific Northwest* (New York: Harper & Row, 1957), 148-154.

⁴² DeMarco, *Short History of Portland*, 17; Johansen and Gates, *Empire of the Columbia*, 148-154, 274.

⁴³ Abbot, *Portland: Gateway*, 15.

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Washington Street, marking the modest beginnings of Portland's rise as a marketing center and port.⁴⁴ In 1845, Lovejoy sold his share of the land claim to Benjamin Stark, a young New Orleans-born merchant who had arrived aboard the *Toulon* in charge of a shipment of Eastern goods bound for Pettygrove's warehouse and store. Stark and Pettygrove were instrumental in establishing the city's first major trading pattern, the "triangle trade" between San Francisco, Honolulu and Portland, involving lumber, wheat, salt fish, sugar, and general merchandise.

In 1845, with Pettygrove's store serving as the commercial hub for the tiny settlement and high hopes for the future, Lovejoy hired 1843 pioneer Thomas Brown to plat a grid of sixteen blocks just south of today's Skidmore/Old Town Historic District. Bordered by narrow streets, blocks measuring 200 feet by 200 feet were divided into eight 50-foot by 100-foot lots, setting the scale for future street frontages throughout the early city.⁴⁵ In 1849-50, new townsite owner Daniel Lownsdale platted over 100 new blocks, extending the city right to the northern edge of the original Overton claim (the south line of today's Ankeny Street). In 1850, John Couch platted a portion of his claim abutting just to the north in the same pattern (although at an off-set, with streets now running true north-south). Thus by this date, all of the land within the present historic district was platted (though not necessarily improved) with a fine-grained grid that was perhaps more suited to a small village than an aspiring metropolis.

Like all nascent pioneer towns urban plans notwithstanding, 1840s Portland was dominated by the surrounding wilderness. An early diarist described the frontier character of the town in early 1848:

*Portland has two white houses and one brick and three wood colored frame houses and a few cabins ... We traveled four or five miles through the thickest woods I ever saw ... [on an] intolerably bad road ... These woods are infested with wild cats, panthers, bears and wolves.*⁴⁶

The visions and efforts of Portland's early proprietors, unlike those of many other hopeful western speculators, soon began to bear fruit. Utilitarian wood-frame stores, warehouses and hotels, often designed in vernacular interpretations of Classical Revival styles, sprang up rapidly in the modest but growing downtown, which extended south from the southern fringes of Couch's Addition along Front and First Streets, through the current historic district. The location and date of the first structure within the historic district proper is not known with certainty, but was possibly John Couch's warehouse and wharf, constructed by 1849 near the foot of what would become Couch and Davis Streets. One of the first documented businesses within the district was that of Andrew Skidmore (father of the fountain's namesake, Stephen Skidmore), who established the California House hotel in the late 1840s atop his house on First Street, between what is now Burnside and Couch streets. Here he housed his family, ran a general store, and sold insurance.⁴⁷ By 1851, as many as thirty businesses were in operation, including Henry Corbett's dry goods store at Front and Oak and William S. Ladd's wholesale liquor business at 46 Front Street. Both men would become leading figures among Portland's economic and political elite.

⁴⁴ Jewel Lansing, *Portland: People, Politics, and Power, 1851-2001* (Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 2003), 1 and 6; MacColl, *Merchants, Money, and Power*, 8; DeMarco, *Short History of Portland*, 33-35.

⁴⁵ Hawkins, *Grand Era of Cast-Iron Architecture*, 24.

⁴⁶ Charles H. Carey, *General History of Oregon* (Portland: Metropolitan Press, 1936; reprint, Portland: Binford & Mort, 1971), 655 (reprint edition). The reference to a brick structure at this early period is intriguing, but not supported by other sources known to the authors.

⁴⁷ Eugene E. Snyder, *Skidmore's Portland: His Fountain and Its Sculptor* (Portland: Binford & Mort, 1973), 16; MacColl, *Merchants, Money, and Power*, 19.

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By 1850, the 800-person community was the largest settlement in the Pacific Northwest, but was still very much a frontier village, derided by outsiders as “Stumptown” and “Mudtown.” It was a place where “stumps from fallen firs lay scattered dangerously about Front and First Streets ... humans and animals, carts and wagons slogged through a sludge of mud and water ... sidewalks often disappeared during spring floods.”⁴⁸ Portland’s future as the region’s leading city was far from assured. Other valley and river towns, such as Milwaukie, Linnton, Milton, and not least, the venerable Oregon City, competed fiercely for population, business, and the vital transportation and trade services and relationships needed to connect the still isolated area to regional, national and international markets.

Front Street: Commerce and the Rise of a Metropolis, 1851 - 1880

*The Far West was more distinctively urban [than the Midwest] in its own way. San Francisco and Portland grew earlier, in comparison with their hinterlands, than Chicago and Detroit; they were the bridgeheads from which the East conquered the wilderness. And they were general headquarters as well, throughout the complex warfare of settlement and development. They collected and paid out the capital that the whole region needed—to water its dry land, to dig its mines, to build its railroads, to collect its ores and crops and ship them back to the East. —Earl Pomeroy, *The Pacific Slope*.*

In the three decades between 1850 and 1880, Portland experienced remarkable population growth and economic expansion. In its first census in 1850, the city’s population was 821 and, like many frontier towns, was predominantly male, with 653 male whites, 164 female whites and four “free colored” individuals. By 1880 the city had grown to 17,577 persons, and, though dwarfed by San Francisco, with a population of 233,959, Portland was the largest city in the Northwest, clearly outdistancing Seattle with its 3,533 persons.⁴⁹ Within ten years following incorporation by territorial charter in 1851, Portland opened its first public school, formed a fire department, installed telegraph lines, and established the third gas works on the Pacific Coast.⁵⁰ In 1872 the city’s first public transit service was established—a horse and mule-drawn railway running along First Street through Skidmore/Old Town. That same year Portland was lauded as one of the richest cities, per capita, in the country. By 1880, the former village had transitioned into a complete, fully urban community—the “Metropolis of the Northwest.”

In this era, Portland’s downtown, centered on Front and First Streets,⁵¹ developed into the region’s most impressively urbanized area, its substantial three and four-story brick and cast-iron buildings lending the city a

⁴⁸ MacColl, *Merchants, Money, and Power*, 18-19.

⁴⁹ See Table 1 Population of Selected Western Cities 1850-1920, for more population figures and data sources.

⁵⁰ City of Portland Auditor’s Office, “Portland Historical Timeline,” <http://www.portlandonline.com/auditor/> (accessed May 19, 2005).

⁵¹ Portland’s first central business district stretched south along Front and First Streets from about North D Street (now NW Davis Street), to about Taylor Street, encompassing today’s Skidmore/Old Town Historic District. The geographic boundaries of the historic district were drawn to encompass an *extant* concentration of downtown Portland’s Italianate, American Romanesque and Commercial Style buildings, dating from the mid-nineteenth through early twentieth centuries. From a strictly historical perspective, however, these boundaries especially along the southern edge of the district, are somewhat artificial as the earliest commercial core was not confined to Skidmore/Old Town, but stretched south to the vicinity of the Yamhill Historic District where another smaller collection of extant early commercial buildings is concentrated. The downtown’s “first” early buildings located south of the present Skidmore/Old Town, including such structures as the Cree Building (1862) and the Ladd and Tilton Bank (1868), have generally not survived, many victims of the Great Fire of 1873 or “uptown” redevelopment pressure in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

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metropolitan ambiance surpassed in the Far West only by San Francisco. But Portland's prominence was not limited to mere appearances for it had emerged as the economic capital of the Northwest, that, in Paul Merriam's words "extended its economic influence in important ways so as to dominate leading sectors of the economy of its hinterland—especially in trade, transportation, finance, and manufacturing."⁵² Front Street's wholesale merchants, such as Allen & Lewis, Corbett, Failing & Company, and McCracken & Company supplied manufactures, dry goods, groceries and commodities to communities throughout the developing West, from the farms of the Willamette Valley and Columbia Basin to the mining towns of Idaho and the lumber camps of Puget Sound. Many wholesale merchants also operated as commission, consignment and export agents, brokering agricultural commodity transactions. This typically involved extending credit to farmers or grain dealers in advance of expected harvests, and then buying and reselling their products on the San Francisco, East Coast or foreign markets. The Oregon Steam Navigation Company, with its massive warehouse and dock facility between Pine and Ash and a huge fleet of river steamers, monopolized the Columbia-Snake river transportation system as far upriver as Walla Walla and Lewiston, controlling a vital trade link between the Oregon Country and the markets of California, the East Coast, the Far East and Europe. Portland's financial institutions, such as the Ladd & Tilton Bank and the Mortgage Bank of Oregon and Washington, provided the capital and exchange services needed for urban and agricultural land development, farming and commercial growth throughout the northern Pacific Slope, from Portland's growing East Side to the Columbia Basin and the Inland Empire.

Foundations of a Trade Economy

Central to Portland's emergence as a major West Coast city was its role as a commercial trade center, serving not only the immediate region, but the greater Willamette Valley and eventually the "Inland Empire" of the Columbia River system, stretching into what would become parts of Washington, Idaho, Montana and British Columbia. A number of factors contributed to the city's early mercantile success and set the stage for its growth trajectory. Critical was Portland's ability to take advantage of its geographic location by developing transportation and business connections to both its hinterland and national and international trade networks. Positioned just below the Ross Island sand bars that obstructed ocean-going vessels from navigating further upriver on the Willamette, Portland was a natural trans-shipment point for the Willamette Valley's agricultural products, sent downriver by barge or stern-wheelers and loaded onto ocean-going sailing and steam vessels from the Front Street wharves. In 1868, Judge Matthew Deady noted that "in 1850, shipping began to arrive freely from California and the Sandwich [Hawaiian] Islands. Couch & Co. dispatched the Brig Emma Preston to China ... [in 1851] regular steam communications with San Francisco was established."⁵³ So too the city was located only a few miles downriver from the first major navigational impediment on the Columbia, "the Cascades," the portage around which would prove to be a critical link in the greater Columbia trade system and which Portland's merchant-elite would fight successfully to monopolize. Another early factor was completion of the Canyon Road in 1853, providing Portland with the best connection of any of the competing upper Willamette towns through the West Hills to the rich farmlands and settlements of the Tualatin Plains and Yamhill Valley.⁵⁴

If Portland was favorably positioned at the deep-water head of an extensive river network with the potential to knit together a vast hinterland, it still needed markets for its commodities, goods and services. The demand for

⁵² Paul Gilman Merriam, *Portland, Oregon, 1840-1890: A Social and Economic History* (PhD diss., University of Oregon, Eugene, 1971), 256.

⁵³ Matthew Deady, "Portland-On-Wallamet," *Overland Monthly* 1 (1868): 34-43.

⁵⁴ Johansen and Gates, *Empire of the Columbia*, 336-350.

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provisions and materiel to fuel the Northwest's sporadic Indian Wars provided an early boost to the fledgling city's traders. Of even greater significance for Portland's economic success was the growth of Western gold and mineral mining. Touched-off by the famous 1848 discoveries near Sutter's Mill in Northern California (which nearly depopulated Portland for a time but also brought enormous profits to the merchants that stayed, as prices in California skyrocketed), the great Northwest mining era stretched into the 1870s and encompassed at least eleven major mining districts and numerous smaller ones throughout Oregon, Washington, Idaho, Nevada, Montana, and British Columbia. Portland was not the only entrepôt serving the vast mining frontier, but it dominated the mining trade north of California in the early phases into the early 1860s. Over time, it was challenged in British Columbia by the rise of Victoria, in the south by Salt Lake City, and from the east by St. Louis and other Midwestern cities (via the Missouri River system and later the ever-westward extension of the railroads). San Francisco, the urban dynamo of the Far West, had a jump on everyone; by the mid 1850s its political sophistication, financial resources, trade connections, and business expertise made it a commercial threat virtually everywhere west of the continental divide. However, throughout the mining era, Portland controlled at least portions of the trade associated with all of the major mining areas north of California, and it firmly retained dominion in the "inner circle" most easily served by the Columbia River, including the Kootenay, Clearwater, Salmon, Powder, and John Day mining districts (see Map MO7).⁵⁵

The mining frontier provided early markets for Oregon's agricultural and lumber products and the imported manufactured goods that were distributed by the wholesale merchant houses beginning to dominate Front Street. In the opposite direction, gold quickly became one of the Portland's most important "exports." Gold dust was shipped downriver from the eastern mines on Oregon Steam Navigation Company boats, usually in the custody of Wells, Fargo & Company agents, whose offices were located on Front Street, north of Stark,⁵⁶ where it was assayed and prepared for re-shipment to San Francisco or New York on coastal steamers or ocean vessels docked at the Front Street wharves. In 1864, \$7.6 million in gold was shipped from Portland to San Francisco; in 1865, Wells, Fargo alone shipped over \$6 million in gold from Portland. Smaller amounts of gold were handled by Portland's homegrown Land & Tilton Bank, located at First and Stark.⁵⁷

This two-way commerce with the mining frontier established trade patterns and relationships that Portland's mercantile and shipping concerns would continue to exploit for many decades, as the markets for manufactured goods and foodstuffs in the boom-and-bust mining areas were augmented by the more reliable needs of the settlements and farming communities of the interior and coastal Northwest. Mining also helped the region's economic system by hastening the adoption of gold as a means of exchange and building the capacity of Portland's financial institutions. In the words of Johansen and Gates, "gold rushes and Indian wars gave the Willamette Valley farmers markets, and the Columbia River and its tributaries were the highways over which their produce moved. Portland was the depot for this traffic and by 1858 had overshadowed all of its rivals [along the Willamette and lower Columbia rivers]."⁵⁸

Wholesale Trade: Supplying the Pacific Northwest

Wholesale trade and distribution was critical to Portland's economic success and rise as a major urban center. Concentrated in the riverfront-oriented urban core encompassing today's Skidmore/Old Town Historic District

⁵⁵ D. W. Meinig, *The Great Columbia Plain: A Historical Geography, 1805-1910* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1968), 214-219 and passim.

⁵⁶ Wells, Fargo later had offices at First and Stark and First and Ankeny.

⁵⁷ Merriam, *Portland, Oregon, 185-191*, 226-228; DeMarco, *Short History of Portland*, 36-39.

⁵⁸ Johansen and Gates, *Empire of the Columbia*, 338.

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and stretching to the south along Front Street, the city's trading companies supplied a wealth of products to cities and towns throughout the growing Pacific Northwest, including all kinds of manufactured and dry goods, hardware and building products, agricultural implements and machinery, food stuffs and liquor. One of the earliest and most long-lived of the Skidmore/Old Town firms engaged in this trade was Allen & Lewis, which specialized in the wholesale grocery business. Founded in 1853 by Cicero Lewis and Lucien Allen, their first building was located at the northeast corner of Front and Burnside Streets. Expanding into grain export in the 1870s, Allen & Lewis became one of the "foremost wholesale houses not only in Portland but of the entire West Coast," with branches in Spokane and Walla Walla, Washington and La Grande, Baker City, Eugene, and Marshfield (Coos Bay), Oregon. In 1882, they constructed a full-block, three-story cast-iron building designed by Warren Williams on Front between Couch and Davis (demolished in 1942). Its 100,000 square feet of space (including docks) housed their business and, initially, other wholesale firms, including paint, glass and door suppliers. For a time the company also operated out of the Bickel Block (#91).⁵⁹

Another example of the district's enterprising wholesale firms is Corbitt & Macleay, located at 13 and 15 Front Street, between Ash and Vine, and later further south at 64 and 66 Front Street. Starting in the wholesale grocery and liquor trade, the firm, led by Scottish transplant Donald Macleay, diversified and expanded, becoming a major commission and shipping merchant and leading exporter of Columbia wheat to Europe. The firm also canned and exported salmon and supplied ship spars, planking and other products to the Hong Kong market.⁶⁰

Liquor was a valuable and in-demand product on the western frontier and Portland quickly became one of the major liquor distribution centers in the Far West. Ladd, Reed & Co. located at 73 Front Street, was a pioneering firm in this lucrative business. The company, dating from the 1850s, provided a source of early wealth that partners William Ladd and Simeon Reed later parlayed into myriad other successful business ventures, including shipping, banking, manufacturing and real estate development, setting them atop Portland's political and economic elite. In 1865, Portland had at least four wholesale liquor suppliers, including Millard & Van Schuyver, which advertised itself as "successors to Ladd, Reed & Co." By 1878, there were at least ten wholesalers specializing in liquor, two of which were listed by R. Dun & Co. as among the city's ten wealthiest companies, including the Portland branch of A. P. Hotaling, a San Francisco-based firm that would later bottle and sell liquor as the first tenant of the 1889 Skidmore Block on First and Burnside (#72). Most of the liquor sold out of Portland was imported, but Addison and Starr Lewis, who would found the First National Bank of Portland, operated a distillery at 70 Front Street, between Pine and Oak. Portland distributors supplied establishments throughout the greater Northwest and did a good business with intermediary suppliers of the saloons and camps in the mining districts of eastern Oregon, Washington, Idaho, and British Columbia. The records of the firm of Humiston, Wilson & Company, located at 87 Front Street, show accounts between 1859 and 1864 in Canyon City, Dalles City, and Umatilla Landing, Oregon and Lewiston, Idaho, as well as Mid- and Upper-Willamette Valley towns such as Eugene City, Albany, Butteville, and Scio. Portland itself formed a large home-grown market, judging by its forty-four retail liquor establishments in 1865, which grew to no fewer than seventy-three by 1873. These included a number of famous (or perhaps notorious) saloons in and near Skidmore/Old Town such as the Oro Fino on Stark between Front and First, with its "choicest qualities of wines, liquors, ales, porter and fine cigars" and oyster bar "where the bivalves will be served in all styles, and at

⁵⁹ MacColl, *Merchants, Money, and Power*, 31-33, 154; Hawkins, *Grand Era*, 122-123; Arthur L. Throckmorton, *Oregon Argonauts: Merchant Adventurers on the Western Frontier* (Portland: Oregon Historical Society, 1961), 127; *Allen and Lewis Preferred Stock*, 1, no. 6, June 1, 1916.

⁶⁰ MacColl, *Merchants, Money, and Power*, 215; City Directories for 1873 and 1890.

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all hours.”⁶¹

Portland’s merchants, some of whom branched into manufacturing, also supplied the farming, mining, milling and lumbering machinery and other equipment needed to develop the Northwest’s expanding agricultural and resource extraction economies. The Parke & Lacey Machinery Company manufactured, imported and exported various engines, boilers, milling and logging equipment and other machinery from its location in the Bickel Block (#91) at Front and Couch. Following the closure of the theater and public market in the New Market Block (#45) in the late 1880s, the building housed the firm of Staver & Walker, “Largest Machinery and Vehicle Repository on the Coast,” which marketed agricultural and milling equipment, engines, wagons and carriages throughout the Northwest, with branches in La Grande, Oregon, Walla Walla, Spokane, and Pullman, Washington, and Moscow, Idaho.⁶² The Portland machine shops and foundries that supplied architectural ironwork for Skidmore/Old Town’s buildings also manufactured agricultural machinery and implements that were exported from the city and constituted an important sector in Portland’s modest but growing manufacturing base.⁶³

While some of Skidmore/Old Town’s early trading companies, such as Allen & Lewis, remained prosperous into the twentieth century, numerous others were more short-lived. One example worthy of note is the mercantile firm owned and operated in the 1850s by Abner Hunt Francis at Front and Stark. Abner, a friend of famed abolitionist Frederick Douglass, arrived in Portland in 1851 with his wife Sydnia and his brother O. B. Francis and were among the early city’s very few African-Americans. Within days of opening their trading business, Abner’s brother was arrested for violating the territorial exclusion law of 1849, which made it illegal for “any negro or mulatto to come in or reside within the limits” of Oregon. In September 1851, Judge O. C. Pratt ordered the Francis family to leave the territory. The expulsion order was not enforced however, after a petition signed by 211 Portland residents protesting their expulsion and urging repeal of the law convinced the legislature not to enforce it. Abner Francis remained in Portland for a decade, operating a profitable trading business and amassing a fortune estimated at \$36,000 when he left for Vancouver Island in 1860. If Francis’ economic success was unusual for an African American in early Portland, it is not surprising that it was earned by running a trade house on bustling Front Street.

Portland competed directly with San Francisco in the wholesale distribution trade. That city had risen meteorically as the undisputed premier city of the West Coast following the gold rush, and its financial, trade, and shipping interests were preeminent throughout much of the Far West. Even with its geographic advantage with respect to much of the Pacific Northwest and the Inland Empire, Portland was at a disadvantage as long as its merchants were dependant on San Francisco as the shipping intermediary for imported goods from the East Coast and Europe. Beginning in the late 1860s, Portland merchants, conscious of “working under the hand of San Francisco,” in the words of *Oregonian* editor Harvey Scott, made concerted efforts to arrange for direct purchase and shipment of goods to Portland. As Portland’s trading firms matured in the 1870s and 1880s, they were increasingly successful in cutting-out San Francisco as an intermediary, lessening port duties, tariffs, mark-ups, and other “friction” costs. Increasingly free from dependency on San Francisco, Portland acquired a larger and more independent regional economic status, which its business and political elite used, in turn, to extend the city’s economic hegemony over its own burgeoning hinterland, which included not only the

⁶¹ MacColl, *Merchants, Money, and Power*, 213; *Portland City Directory*, 1865, 1873; Portland *HRI*; Sanborn Map 1901, *Guide to the Humiston, Wilson, and Company Records*, 1859-1964 (Oregon Historical Society Research Library, finding aid).

⁶² *Portland and Vicinity: Willamette Valley, Columbia River, Puget Sound* (Portland: L. Samuel, 1887).

⁶³ Portland’s early economy was distinctly commercial. Manufacturing, while important locally, was relatively underdeveloped in the nineteenth century and to some extent well into the twentieth century.

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Willamette Valley, but, large parts of western and coastal Oregon and Washington and the great interior region stretching up the Columbia and Snake river drainages.

Export Trade: Regional Development and World Markets

Portland had quickly established itself as the Northwest's primary importing and wholesale supply center, but it also emerged as its most important export hub—the nerve center for financing, marketing and shipping the region's growing agricultural surpluses. By the 1870s, maritime export of agricultural products, especially wheat and flour, was Portland's most important commercial activity, a trade sector important to Portland's economy to this day. Initially, much of the agricultural trade was actually “upriver,” as the produce of the Willamette Valley was shipped to booming interior mining regions. With the transition of the interior Columbia Basin to an agricultural base following the successful adoption of “dry-land” farming techniques, this trade reversed, and, beginning in the mid-1860s, Portland exports of grain and other agricultural products from the Columbia region grew markedly, assisted by improvements to the Columbia River transportation system, such as channel dredging and portage railroads, pushed forward by Portland's business interests. This pattern, in which the produce of a broad interior region was brought to international markets via a river-based transportation network that was focused on a lower-Columbia trade hub, was a clear echo of the earlier trade systems of the North West and Hudson's Bay Companies, which had likewise funneled furs from the vast Pacific Slope to their trading and export centers at Ft. George (Astoria) and Ft. Vancouver on the lower Columbia. With its deep-water port, access to the Pacific Ocean, urban infrastructure, and an established and successful wholesale merchant community, Portland was the logical trade and finance nexus for the massive expansion of the Columbia grain trade and the development of the Inland Empire that began in the 1860s and extended well into the next century (see Maps MO6 and MO8).⁶⁴

Through the 1860s, most of the grain and other agricultural products shipped from Portland were bound for California. In 1867, products valued at about \$2.5 million (excluding shipments of gold valued at about \$4 million) were exported from Portland, including some fifty different types of trade articles, most of which went to San Francisco, bound for California consumers or re-export to foreign ports. The most valuable products (other than gold) were wheat, flour and bran, collectively worth over \$800,000. Other exports included \$130,000 worth of wool, \$90,000 of fresh and dried apples, \$62,000 of bacon and \$35,000 of butter. In a pattern that would continue for many decades, manufactured and highly processed goods made up a small proportion of exported products, but a sizable quantity of barrel headings and staves valued at \$750,000 were also shipped.⁶⁵

By the early 1870s wheat was Portland's largest export product and with the grain trade rapidly rising as the one of the city's primary economic engines, Portland's merchants worked hard to break San Francisco's control of the export market for Oregon wheat by expanding direct connections to growing national and international agricultural markets. In what was probably the first direct shipment of Oregon grain to Europe, 22,166 Centals (100 pound sacks) of wheat, worth \$31,000, left Portland for Liverpool on the *Helen Angier* in 1869. The deal was brokered by John McCracken of J. McCracken & Co., a successful importer, shipping agent and commission merchant with offices on Front Street north of Ankeny (the firm would later have offices in the United Carriage and Baggage Transfer Co. building (#49)). In an 1872 advertisement, the company claimed to represent five Oregon flour mills and specialized in flour, grain, bacon, lard and fruit—“purchases and sales made for the

⁶⁴ Throckmorton, *Oregon Argonauts*, 304-309; Earl Pomeroy, *The Pacific Slope* (New York: Knopf, 1965), 6, 50, 120-139; Merriam, *Portland, Oregon*, 256-299; MacColl, *Merchants, Money, and Power*, 144; Meinig, *Great Columbia Plain*, passim.

⁶⁵ Deady, “Portland-on-Wallamett,” 34-43; Scott, *History*, 217-245.

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Boston and New York markets.”⁶⁶

Direct foreign grain exports grew in size and value through the 1870s and into the 1880s. In 1871, wheat and flour valued at \$475,000 accounted for more than 86 percent of the city’s foreign exports (see Table 4). In 1879, \$3.1 million worth of wheat and flour left the city, carried away by more than 90 visiting grain vessels. By 1882, the value of foreign wheat and flour exports had risen to nearly \$6.5 million and accounted for almost 99 percent of Portland’s foreign exports and more than half of all foreign and domestic exports combined.⁶⁷

The largest single export market for Portland’s wheat was Great Britain. In 1871, more than 80 percent of foreign wheat exports were shipped to Great Britain, primarily to the English port of Liverpool. Portland’s trade relationship with Britain was cemented through strong personal and financial ties between business interests that illustrate the extraordinary entrepreneurial and investment efforts of British—and especially Scottish—capitalists and traders in the development of the American West in the last half of the nineteenth century. Arriving in 1866, Donald Macleay was among the earliest and most successful of the Scottish businessmen to come to Portland. Leading the aforementioned wholesale firm of Corbitt & Macleay, he became one of Portland’s largest wheat exporters in the 1870s, using his English and Scottish connections to steer grain towards British ports. In Scotland for business in 1874, Macleay wrote to Portland banker and trade magnate John Ainsworth recommending a fellow Scot, William Reid, who was soon coming to Portland representing “an extensive company of capitalists in Scotland who are looking to our new country for an outlet of capital which we so much need.” Reid would become one of the city’s most influential businessmen and a key channel for Scottish investment in the Northwest. Another important individual in Portland’s relationship with Britain was Scotsman James Laidlaw, who came to Portland in 1872 and established the grain trading and shipping firm of James Laidlaw & Co., with offices at 16 North Front. Laidlaw’s trade successes and business connections in Britain resulted in his appointment as Vice-Consul for Great Britain in 1874. Managing both his private interests in grain trading and his public duties representing the commercial interests of Britain, Laidlaw flourished in Portland for several decades. He finally closed his trading firm in 1896, when he became Consul for Great Britain in the district comprised of Oregon, Washington, Idaho, Montana, and Alaska, which had its headquarters in Portland.⁶⁸

In 1878, Balfour, Guthrie & Co., a division of the huge British commodity trading firm Balfour, Williamson & Co., established a Portland branch under the local direction of Scotsman Walter J. Burns. Balfour, Guthrie was soon one of the largest grain traders in Portland, surpassing locally-based trading firms like Corbitt & Macleay and Allen & Lewis in wealth and longevity. The firm’s representatives purchased wheat from Northwest farms and exported it from Portland via their subsidiary shipping line. Expanding into crop financing, farm mortgaging, fire insurance and flour milling, Balfour, Guthrie invested heavily in Portland and the Pacific Northwest, constructing more than seventy warehouses on Portland’s waterfront, and building one of the largest flouring mills in the Northwest on the waterfront north of Skidmore/Old Town (Crown Mills). By 1890, more than ten major Scottish business institutions were thriving in Oregon. Scotsmen such as Macleay, Reid, Burns, and Laidlaw had joined the ranks of Portland’s economic and political leadership, alongside Yankees like William Ladd and Henry Corbett and German Jews like Bernard Goldsmith and Philip Wasserman, both

⁶⁶ Throckmorton, *Oregon Argonauts*, 304-309; *Samuel’s City Directory*, 1873, 378.

⁶⁷ Scott, *History*, chap. 5 and 7; MacColl, *Merchants, Money, and Power*, 144, 154-155; Merriam, *Portland*, 282-290.

⁶⁸ MacColl, *Merchants, Money, and Power*, 214; Joseph Gaston, *Portland, Oregon: Its History and Builders in Connection with the Antecedent Explorations, Discoveries and Movements of the Pioneers that Selected the Site for the Great City of the Pacific*, 3 vols. (Portland: The S. J. Clarke Publishing Co., 1911), 21-22.

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successful merchants who served terms as Portland mayors.⁶⁹

While grain dominated the export trade, other commodities were shipped out of Portland as well, including wool, lumber, fruit and salmon. By 1867, wool was second only to grain and flour in export value in Oregon, much of it sent down the Columbia from The Dalles, “fast becoming the largest primary wool market in the world,” and shipped from Portland to East Coast ports, especially New England, a major textile milling region. Lumber exports were also significant, although the natural advantages of massive timber stands adjacent to extensive ocean waterways would allow Puget Sound ports to eventually surpass Portland and Oregon in the lumber trade. Most of Portland’s lumber was intended for domestic markets, especially California, although some was sent to Asia, Australia and Hawai’i. George Weidler’s Willamette Steam Mills Lumbering and Manufacturing Company in Couch’s Addition produced lumber for local and export markets, including Australia and Hong Kong, much of it brokered by John Ainsworth, one of the principals in the Oregon Steam Navigation Company and co-founder in 1885 of Ainsworth National Bank, located at Third and Pine.⁷⁰

Diversification: Transportation, Investment, and Financial Services

Beginning in the 1860s, the most successful of Portland’s merchant-entrepreneurs were able to capitalize—literally and figuratively—on their early trading profits by diversifying into more complex business activities. First-generation merchants like William S. Ladd (who later took pains to hide his beginnings in the wholesale liquor trade), Henry Corbett (who made his early profits selling agricultural machinery), Henry Failing (hardware and miscellaneous goods), and Simeon Reed (a partner in Ladd’s wholesale businesses) parlayed their early trade earnings into a tightly held and closely knit, if occasionally acrimonious and competing group of banks, transportation companies, investment syndicates, and mining, manufacturing and real estate ventures that collectively broadened and deepened Portland’s regional economic preeminence. One of the best examples is the rise of the Oregon Steam Navigation Company (OSNC), which illustrates Earl Pomeroy’s adage that “few local enterprises were as large and as powerful as those that carried their goods.”⁷¹ Although organized as a corporation, the OSNC was tightly controlled by Portlanders William Ladd, Simeon Reed, steamship owner Capt. John Ainsworth, and Robert Thompson of The Dalles.

Operating from offices on Stark Street and a massive wharf and warehouse (demolished) between Ash and Pine in Skidmore/Old Town, the OSNC was able to gain control of shipping on the Columbia within a few years of its founding in 1860 by successfully monopolizing key portages at the Cascades and The Dalles, sustained reinvestment of company profits into better equipment and infrastructure, and at times ruthless protection of its interests. At the time of its sale to rail magnate Henry Villard in 1880, its assets included four railways, extensive real estate holdings in Portland, Astoria, The Dalles, Umatilla, and Wallula, and 26 steam ships with a capacity of over 15,000 tons. The OSNC not only controlled shipping on the Columbia, from gold dust to flour, but also its passenger traffic. Because essentially all boats stopped in Portland, it also supported the local economy, moving “tens of thousands of people, who spent money at Portland’s hotels, restaurants and entertainment venues.” It became the city’s most influential company and perhaps the best local example of a large, “Gilded Age” monopolistic corporation. Reorganized as the Oregon Railway and Navigation Company and tied to the Northern Pacific rail empire after 1880, it extended Portland’s “national influence while

⁶⁹ MacColl, *Merchants, Money, and Power*, 214; W. Turrentine Jackson, *The Enterprising Scot: Investors in the American West after 1873* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1968); City of Portland, Bureau of Planning, *Centennial Mill Historic Preservation Assessment*, 2006, 7.

⁷⁰ MacColl, *Merchants, Money, and Power*, 150; Throckmorton, *Oregon Argonauts*, 300-301.

⁷¹ Pomeroy, *Pacific Slope*, 96.

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solidifying its position at the center of the region's banking, trading and transportation network."⁷²

Portland's early merchants were also instrumental in establishing and expanding the region's banking and finance systems, mirroring the ante-bellum American pattern in which large merchant houses came to control enormous amounts of the nation's available capital and increasingly handled many financial and credit transactions. Portland's first bank—the first in the Far West north of San Francisco—was founded in 1859 by William S. Ladd and his former trading partner C. E. Tilton, resident of San Francisco. The Ladd & Tilton Bank, housed at first in a second-story addition to Ladd's Front Street trade house, was immediately successful, helping Ladd become immensely wealthy. More importantly, the bank fulfilled the need for a full-service bank in the city and provided a supply of local capital for real estate development and non-mercantile businesses, such as sawmills, flouring mills and various manufacturing operations throughout the region. Quickly becoming a preeminent Pacific Northwest institution, a dedicated facility was completed at the northwest corner of Stark and First in 1868. Perhaps the most impressive building in the city at the time, the elaborate cast-iron fronted bank stood until 1954, when it was demolished. Fortunately, Eric Ladd (no relation to William Ladd), an early Portland preservationist, salvaged the iron façades which were incorporated in the 1967 expansion of the nearly identical 1869 Ladd & Bush Bank building in Salem, Oregon.⁷³

In 1873, Portland had three banks; by 1892 it had 20 and was clearly the financial services capital of the Northwest. Portland's early financial district radiated from its core between Stark and Washington from Front to Third, and overlapped with the southern portion of today's Skidmore/Old Town district. It included a number of financial institutions directly tied to the city's merchant elite such as the First National Bank of Portland, located on First Street near Alder, organized by Addison and Lewis Starr in 1866 and purchased by traders-cum-financiers Henry Corbett and Henry Failing in 1869. Other local financial institutions included the United States National Bank of Oregon at Second and Pine and the Ainsworth National Bank at Third and Oak, founded by pioneer ship captain John Ainsworth.⁷⁴

While local banks like Ladd & Tilton and the First National Bank were clearly important in the development of Portland's financial capacity, their capitalization was relatively small in the scheme of things, and shortage of local capital was a chronic problem in the Pacific Northwest, threatening to slow development. This state of affairs created significant opportunities for East Coast and foreign investors, eager to cash in on the economic potential of the American West. In 1865, the London-based Bank of British Columbia opened a Portland branch, establishing an early British financial connection to the city. The bank's flat-iron-shaped building, bounded by Vine, Ankeny and Front Streets was completed in 1868 and expanded in 1882. With its narrow west façade and entrance facing the Skidmore Fountain, the building was a distinctive Portland landmark until its demolition in 1928, part of a cluster of buildings and short, narrow streets whose "subtle relationships made the grouping of buildings on this street one of the most handsome in the city."⁷⁵

Recognizing the need for capital as a force to maintain high interest rates, a group of Dundee, Scotland, capitalists established the Oregon and Washington Trust and Investment Company in 1873. A Portland office was established as the company's American headquarters, with a local board that included prominent

⁷² Dorothy O. Johansen, "The Oregon Steam Navigation Company," *Pacific Historical Review* (June 1941): 179-188; MacColl, *Merchants, Money, and Power*, 124-139; William Toll, "Commerce, Climate & Community: a History of Portland and Its People," <http://www.ohs.org/education/oregonhistory/> (accessed May 5, 2006).

⁷³ MacColl, *Merchants, Money, and Power*, 104-106; Hawkins, *Grand Era*, 44-47.

⁷⁴ Burrell, *Gold in the Woodpile*, 149 and passim.

⁷⁵ Hawkins, *Grand Era*, 42.

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Portlanders such as former Governor Addison Gibbs, Chief Justice E. D. Shattuck and merchant John McCracken. The company sent William Reid to Portland to act as agent and general manager in 1874. In 1876, he oversaw the construction of a distinctive three-story cast-iron building on First Street between Pine and Oak to house both the Oregon and Washington Trust and Investment Company and another Reid endeavor, the Oregon and Washington Mortgage Bank (#79).

Destined to become one of Portland's most prominent bankers and business leaders, Reid secured loans and mortgages throughout the Pacific Northwest attracting over \$6 million in Scottish capital over a ten year period financing a broad array of agricultural, commercial and residential real estate ventures. Reid would also help form the influential Portland Board of Trade (housed in the New Market Theater Building (#45), and later in the 1907 Board of Trade building at Fourth and Oak). He was also heavily involved financially and politically in the tangled development history of the Northwest's railroads, including promotion of a number of important short lines such as the Oregonian Line (later the Portland and Willamette Valley Railroad) along the west side of the Willamette River. Reid was also responsible for construction of Reid's Block (1883) at the northwest corner of Pine and First Streets, one of the district's now lost cast-iron buildings. However, graced with Scottish thistles and busts of the Earl of Airlie, the Oregon and Washington Trust and Investment Company Building has survived. Restored in 1996, it stands as a reminder of Portland's role as a major financial services center for the Northwest and the importance of international capital in the development of the West.⁷⁶

Urban Environment and Buildings, 1851–1880

Front Street's mercantile buildings, warehouses and wharves were perhaps the defining features of the district's urban character, their solidity animated by the coming and going of river and coastal steamers and ocean-sailing vessels, and the bustle of drays, wagons and carts moving goods to and fro. However, as a part of Portland's first compact downtown, Skidmore/Old Town contained a wide diversity of land uses and activities. Manufacturing, office, retail, institutional and residential uses were all to be found in close quarters to each other, reflecting the somewhat haphazard "mixed-use" spatial pattern common to downtowns of rapidly growing cities across the West in this era.

In 1857 the Hallock and McMillen Building—believed to be the city's oldest extant brick and cast-iron edifice—was constructed by Absalom Hallock at the northwest corner of Front and Oak. Hallock, often credited as the city's first architect, was an active Portland citizen, serving as City Surveyor, Chief Engineer of the Fire Department, and City Councilman. He is believed to have practiced for a time in the building, later working from offices at 51 Front Street advertising himself as "Architect, Civil Engineer, and City Surveyor." He partnered at various times with architect Lou Day and with William McMillen, the building's other namesake, described as a contractor by architectural historian Richard Ritz, who served as Multnomah County Sheriff in 1855. Hallock was also an early officer for the Willamette Iron Works located on the waterfront below NW Davis which producing much of the architectural iron used on Portland's buildings.⁷⁷

⁷⁶ Jackson, *Enterprising Scot*, 24-28, 62, 249-250; E. Kimbark MacColl, *Merchants, Money, and Power*, 214-215; Merriam, *Portland, Oregon*, 310-313.

⁷⁷ While inconsistent, sources indicate that William McMillen probably spelled his name with an "e." Although there is a small chance that the William McMillan mentioned by Richard Ritz as a partner of Hallock is a different individual, it seems unlikely. A William McMillen is listed as rooming at 51 Front Street, the location of Hallock's architecture and engineering practice, in the McCormick city directories of 1864 and 1865. The University of Oregon's online "Guide to Architectural Materials in Special Collections" states that the firm of Hallock & Day changed its name to Hallock & McMillen in 1855. Harvey Scott refers to the "Hallock & McMillen" building in his 1890 History of Portland. See also Hawkins, *Grand Era*, 15-16; George Belknap, *American Bibliographical Notes: And More Addenda to Belknap's Oregon Imprints* (Worcester, MA: American Antiquarian Society, 1976),

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Another extant building from this early period is the nearby Delschneider Building (#90), erected in 1859 on Oak Street by Joseph Delschneider (or Dielschneider) to house his Novelty Iron and Brass Works.⁷⁸ William Hawkins states that the building housed the Oregon Iron Works in 1863, owned by Oregon Governor A. C. Gibbs.

One of the most significant surviving structures of this period is the three-story New Market Theatre building (#45), constructed in 1872 by prosperous businessman and steamboat operator Captain Alexander Ankeny on the large, irregularly shaped block bounded by Ankeny and Ash streets and First and Second Avenues. This brick, cast-iron fronted structure was one of the most expensive in the city costing Ankeny more than \$100,000. Following the “national fashion of incorporating culture and commerce in the same building,” it housed the city’s public market, commercial offices and a lavish 800 seat theater (1,200 at standing-room capacity).⁷⁹ The first floor market hall contained twenty-eight marble-countered stalls, displaying a variety of produce, meats, fish, baked goods, dairy products and other provisions. Anders and Rowe occupied three stalls, selling fine groceries including “imported delicacies” and “cordials, liquors, and fine teas and coffee.” One stall was occupied by Frank Fabre’s coffee and oyster bar. On portions of the second floor were the offices of the influential Board of Trade and the private apartment of Captain Ankeny (and his manservant Sam and dog Prince). The gymnasium of the Turn Verein Society, a prominent German-American athletic and social club, was located on the third floor. The building’s wings housed Pfunder’s Drugstore and the offices of several prominent businesses, including Wells Fargo and Co. (express and banking services), James Laidlaw & Co. (grain trading), Western Union Telegraph, the *Oregon Bulletin* newspaper, and a few insurance and real estate agents. The theater itself occupied most of the second and third floors. It finally opened in 1875 with a “beautifully mounted” production of *Rip Van Winkle* and immediately became Portland’s preeminent cultural facility and a symbol of its respectability and maturity as a city. It hosted all kinds of events from the best visiting theatrical productions to important social celebrations, charitable benefits and political rallies. Portland’s most important visitors were fêted here, including former President Ulysses S. Grant in 1879, who was likely struck by the evident growth of the city which he had often visited when he was a young U.S. Army Brevet Captain stationed at nearby Columbia (later Vancouver) Barracks in 1852-1854.⁸⁰ In 1884, champion prize fighter John L. Sullivan demonstrated his pugilistic prowess for local sporting enthusiasts there. That same year, the city’s Jewish community held a celebration honoring English Jewish philanthropist Sir Moses Montfiore. The house, “packed from pit to dome” with Jews and non-Jews alike, heard orations from the city’s leading dignitaries, including Jewish lawyer and merchant David Solis-Cohen and Unitarian minister Thomas Lamb Eliot.⁸¹ The event “truly marked the success and acceptance of Oregon’s Jewish community,” from which many of the city’s successful merchants and political leaders were drawn.⁸²

The New Market Theater was also the site for less savory popular and political events. In January 1886, the local contingent of the Knights of Labor packed the theater in a mass rally aimed against Chinese workers. Following completion of the Northern Pacific Railroad in 1883 which had left many Chinese laborers out of work, and anti-Chinese agitation in other parts of the Northwest, Portland’s Chinese population had swelled to

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⁷⁸ McCormick’s 1865 City Directory lists an F. Delschneider as “machinist, Oak St.”⁷⁹ MacColl, *Merchants, Money, and Power*, 187.⁸⁰ See Hawkins, *Portland’s Historic New Market Theater*, passim.⁸¹ Matthew Deady, *Pharisee Among Philistines*, 455.⁸² Steven Lowenstein, *The Jews of Oregon: 1850-1950* (Portland: Jewish Historical Society of Oregon, 1987), 68-69.

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around 4,000.⁸³ Speaking at the meeting was Seattle anti-Chinese agitator Daniel Cronin, who three months previously had led the violent effort to expulse 200-300 Chinese from Tacoma, most of whom ironically had now relocated to Portland. Although Cronin's declaration that day that within three months there would "not be a working Chinaman in Portland" was overblown, a number of anti-Chinese outbursts occurred in Portland over the next few months culminating in March with several violent attacks on Chinese that required deployment of the state militia.

The heyday of the New Market Theater was remarkably short-lived. It closed in 1887 after a mere 12 years, a victim of "competition from the more spacious and convenient 'up town' facilities."⁸⁴ As early as a few weeks after its opening in 1875, Judge Matthew Deady had noted in his diary that it was "a beautiful little theater, but too far downtown," indicative that even at this early date Portland's leaders were beginning to view the Skidmore area and the northern end of the commercial core in a less favorable light.⁸⁵ If this locale was perhaps no longer the right fit for a preeminent cultural facility, it was certainly still at the center of commercial and manufacturing activity, as the New Market Theater was quickly adapted for use by the Staver & Walker Company, makers of wagons and carriages.

At the end of the 1870s, Skidmore/Old Town was clearly still an integral part of the downtown commercial core with a strong waterfront industrial/mercantile character and a still healthy share of retail and office activity. Impressive multi-storied masonry and cast-iron buildings had largely replaced the district's early frontier-type, wood-frame buildings, reflecting the first decades of success of Portland's earliest generation of business leaders. First Street, anchored by the impressive New Market Block,⁸⁶ had emerged as a more genteel, retail- and office-oriented alternative to wholesale- and waterfront-flavored Front Street as a main thoroughfare. The 1879 *Oregon City Enterprise* enthused,

*First Street presents a gay and festive scene, and is encumbered with as much traffic, trading, strolling, beauty, and ornamental wealth as ere was Kearney Street, San Francisco. We cannot bring to mind a proportionate population that carried itself with so much dignity and importance as the metropolis of Oregon does.*⁸⁷

Maturity and Change, 1880–1900

Portland continued to grow in the period from 1880 through the turn of the century. In 1891 the city consolidated with the cities of Albina and East Portland on the east side of the Willamette, which had growing populations and expanding commercial economies of their own, continuing a sustained eastward urban expansion that shifted the city's population base—if not its political and economic gravity—away from the west side. Geographic, population and economic growth was facilitated by the first bridges across the river, beginning with the Morrison Bridge in 1887, the Steel Bridge just north of the district in 1888, and the first

⁸³ Portland's Chinese population in 1880 was 1,612, constituting 9.2 percent of the city's population. In 1890 it was 4,539 or 9.8 percent of the population, the highest historical percentage making the Chinese the largest group of foreign-born persons in the city. Marie Rose Wong, *Sweet Cakes, Long Journey: The Chinatowns of Portland, Oregon* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2004), 166.

⁸⁴ Hawkins, *Grand Era*, 68.

⁸⁵ Matthew P. Deady, *Pharisee among the Philistines: The Diary of Judge Matthew P. Deady, 1871-1892*, Malcolm Clark, Jr., ed. (Portland: Oregon Historical Society, 1975), 189.

⁸⁶ The "New Market Block" was composed of three connected structures: the 1871 New Market, South Wing (# 61), the 1872 New Market Theater proper (#45), and the 1873 New Market, North Wing (demolished in 1956).

⁸⁷ Hawkins, *Grand Era*, 18.

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Burnside Bridge in the center of Skidmore/Old Town in 1894. The expansion of public transit service accompanied the city's growth; the street railway companies shifted from horse power to electricity in 1891 by which time ten transit companies were in operation in the city.

When viewed in relation to regional urbanization trends, Portland's growth in this period was not as spectacular as in the previous three decades, however. Other Northwest cities, especially Seattle and Tacoma on Puget Sound and Spokane in the interior, had grown up and began to successfully challenge Portland's economic hegemony. In 1880 Portland had almost five times as many residents as Seattle (17,577 compared to 3,553). By 1890, Seattle's population had nearly caught up with Portland's (42,837 and 46,835, respectively) and by 1910 it would surpass Portland as the Northwest's largest city (237,174 and 207,214, respectively). Seattle's growth was fuelled by a growing lumber industry, the profitable Alaska/Yukon trade, new rail connections, and, some historians aver, a more entrepreneurial business community than that led by Portland's now venerable and conservative economic/political leaders. The rise of these other cities marked the maturing of the Pacific Northwest as a region, and a "new balance of metropolitan centers in the Northwest which was considerably more decentralized and complex than that which had existed during the earlier period of Portland's preeminence."⁸⁸ Tables 1 and 2 show the populations of Pacific Northwest cities over a 70-year period, illustrating this regional urbanizing trend. Through 1880, Portland was clearly the most significant Pacific Northwest city, almost five times larger than its nearest competitors, Walla Walla and Seattle. Just ten years later, Tacoma had risen as a major Northwest city and considered together with Seattle, the Puget Sound cities were now eclipsing Portland.

Railroads and Portland's Position in the Northwest

River- and ocean-going trade remained central to Portland's economy in this era. However, like it did throughout the West, the coming of the railroads altered Portland's transportation and economic landscape in profound and sometimes unexpected ways. Portland's preeminence as a commercial center during its first three decades was directly related to its ability to develop and control an extensive river transportation system that enabled a two-way flow of goods and products between the Pacific Northwest and extra-regional suppliers and markets. This system was the primary reason Portland was the Northwest's first and only true major urban center that was firmly established *prior* to the coming of a transcontinental railroad connection. However, Portland's economic elites, including the merchants and bankers of Skidmore/Old Town, were keenly aware that railroads were the critical engines of future economic growth and they fought long and hard to ensure that Portland would become the region's first transcontinental rail hub.

Efforts to bring the railroads to Portland began in the early 1860s with halting work to build a line through the Willamette Valley and southern Oregon to California (Eugene was reached in 1870, Roseburg in 1872, and Sacramento not until 1887, four years after Portland's transcontinental link was completed). The struggle to link the city with the East, a decades-long chapter in the larger story of western railroading, was replete with power struggles between international financiers, manipulations of federal land grants, shifting alliances between national and local promoters, businesses and real estate speculators, and a ruthless environment of competition between various interests—including Northwest cities and towns vying for a link to the continental system. After decades of uncertain progress, Portland's link was secured in 1883 with the completion of the Northern Pacific between St. Paul and the line's nominal "western terminus" at Portland, although, in fact, the line crossed the Columbia River by ferry at Kalama and continued north to Tacoma, where the Northern

⁸⁸ Johansen and Gates, *Empire of the Columbia*, 395.

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Pacific's main western maintenance facility was established. While the coming of the railroads is often credited with ushering in a long economic boom in the Northwest, its effects on Portland's economic growth and the city's status in relation to its hinterland and other Northwest cities were complex. The outcomes of completing the Northern Pacific in 1883, and securing another transcontinental link via the Union Pacific less than two years later, were not as singularly positive as many contemporaries had hoped, or as many still assume. By 1888, the Northern Pacific had completed a second, more direct connection to Puget Sound, branching from the mainline at Wallula and crossing the Cascades via Stampede Pass, thus avoiding the roundabout route along the Columbia River and bypassing Portland. Through the new route and a growing network of branch lines and joint leases between railroad companies, Seattle and Tacoma finally gained efficient connections to the Inland Empire, the Midwest and the East. With direct access to the Pacific Ocean offsetting potentially higher rail costs and Portland's river transportation advantages, the Puget Sound cities were able to successfully compete with Portland for much of the interior grain trade. While Portland continued to expand its grain trade economy, by 1910, Puget Sound ports (primarily Tacoma and Seattle) had firmly eclipsed those of the Columbia (primarily Portland and Astoria), exporting nearly twice as much grain (see Table 5).

So too, the integration of a continental rail system would diminish Portland's relative status as the region's primary wholesaling center and supplier of goods. The expanding rail network allowed other Northwest urban centers to more easily assume these functions within their own growing trade areas. Coinciding with broad national trends, the increasingly extensive and efficient rail system enabled large, "Gilded Age" midwestern and eastern corporations to reduce the importance of intermediary suppliers—which had been so central to Portland's commercial success. They could now directly market their goods to the Northwest's increasingly dispersed local wholesalers and retailers, and, with the rise of mail-order and catalog sales, even directly to consumers.

None of these trends spelled imminent doom for Portland or the merchants of Skidmore/Old Town. New investments in public infrastructure and private development, from improved shipping channels and extensive streetcar lines, to new eastside residential neighborhoods and increasingly larger downtown office buildings, are indicative that the city and its economy continued to grow in this era. But as the new century approached, the "economic dominion" that Portland had established over the Pacific Northwest by the 1880s had begun to fray, as other urban centers—most notably Seattle—matured, established their own hinterlands, and developed their own financial service capabilities. Portland was still a major western city, with a mature economy and significant competitive advantages. As late as 1913, a Federal Reserve committee found that Portland's preeminence in Pacific Northwest banking and finance had persisted well after Seattle had surpassed it in population and other urban statistical categories—but no longer was Portland *the* Metropolis of the Northwest.⁸⁹

Ethnicity, Urban Environment and Buildings, 1880 – 1900

In 1890, more than 37 percent of Portland's population was foreign-born and more than 58 percent had at least one parent born in a foreign country—by these measures making it one of the most ethnically diverse cities in the West, after only San Francisco and San Jose, California (see Table 8). The Chinese formed the largest single national/ethnic group in Portland in the late nineteenth century, with a population in 1880 of 1,612, constituting 9.2 percent of the city's total. By 1890 this grew to 4,539, making up 25.6 percent of the city's foreign-born population and 9.8 percent of the total. The same year, Germans made up the next largest foreign-born group, with 3,652 persons at 7.9 percent of the total population, followed by Great Britain at 4.5 percent,

⁸⁹ Pomeroy, *Pacific Slope*, 138.

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and Ireland at 3.5 percent. Most of the rest of the foreign-born population was from Canada and Scandinavian and Western European countries, with small groups from Russia, Italy and other nations (see Tables 6 and 7). Portland's African-American community was quite small; in 1860 there were but 16 persons listed by the US Census; in 1870 there were 147. By 1890, the African-American population had grown to 480, constituting only one percent of the city's total but accounting for about 40 percent of Oregon's total African-American population. In 1900 more than 70 percent of the state's African Americans lived in Portland (see Table 9).⁹⁰

With an area as geographically small as Skidmore/Old Town, it is difficult to chart with a high degree of precision historical patterns of ethnicity and nationality in isolation from the broader city. However, there is evidence suggesting that, throughout most of the period of significance, Skidmore/Old Town had an ethnically and socially diverse community of business owners, residents and workers. Perhaps not surprisingly, the highest levels of the district's economic ladder—the merchant, banking and propertied elite—were dominated by Yankees from the Northeast and British immigrants, although a number of Jews, predominantly immigrants from Germany, obtained considerable commercial and political success, for example Joe Simon, Bernard Goldsmith and Philip Wasserman. Other European nationalities represented in the district's merchant/capitalist class included Danes, such as Neils Blagen, builder of the 1888 Blagen Block (#71), and Russians.

Skidmore/Old Town's small business owners and labor force (as in western port cities more generally) were highly mobile, making their ethnicity more difficult to pin down. As a port-of-call for European, Asian, Pacific Island and American shipping, Portland drew fortune- and employment-seeking men (and in fewer numbers women) from all over the nation and many foreign countries. While many stayed, others labored for short stints on its wharves or in its warehouses and hotels, or ran a small shop for a time before moving on to other opportunities (California being a perennial draw). The district's lodging houses and hotels were occupied by large numbers of transient men looking for seasonal employment at a northwest lumber camp (a draw for many Scandinavians), mill, or farm, or to sign-up for a term on a steamer headed for the Sandwich Islands or Liverpool.

One of the most easily identifiable and significant immigrant communities in the city and Skidmore/Old Town was the Chinese, primarily from Canton (now Guangdong) Province, making up the largest single group of foreign-born in Portland for many decades. Portland's "Old Chinatown," which was coalescing by the 1860s, was located south of Skidmore/Old Town, centered on the intersection of Second and Alder. However, unlike in most other cities with large Chinese communities such as San Francisco, Tacoma, Chicago, and New York, which developed distinct, clearly-bounded Chinese enclaves, Portland's Chinese population settled in a less rigid spatial pattern. Skidmore/Old Town had a sizable number of Chinese businesses, despite its distance from the center of Old Chinatown.⁹¹ The "Chinese Directory" in Samuel's 1873 *City Directory* lists several such businesses, including wash-houses, stores, physicians and the employment office of Ah Luke on Front between Pine and Oak. Beginning in the period after the flood of 1894, much of the Chinese community began migrating away from Old Chinatown partly by rising real estate values in the portions of the downtown south of Skidmore/Old Town. Chinese businesses, social activities and residences migrated primarily to the area north of Burnside between Third and Fifth Avenues, soon known as "New Chinatown" and forming the nucleus of today's New Chinatown/Japantown Historic District, overlapping the Skidmore/Old Town Historic District along its western edges. The 1911 Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association Building (# 1) on NW Davis and the Hip Sing Association, in the former Portland Seamen's Bethel (# 3) on NW Third, are legacies of this spatial and demographic shift.

⁹⁰ Paul G. Merriam, "The 'Other Portland': A Statistical Note on the Foreign-Born," *OHQ* 80, no. 3 (Fall 1979); U.S. Census.

⁹¹ Wong, *Sweet Cakes*, 265-267.

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Most of Portland's small African-American population in the nineteenth century lived and worked in inner west-side neighborhoods, many in Skidmore/Old Town, where the community planted roots that persisted into the mid-twentieth century, when an influx of black workers serving the World War II ship building industry shifted the community's center of gravity to the East Side. In 1869, the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church was incorporated, meeting in a church they erected in the district on 3rd Avenue, between Burnside and Couch (demolished).

Most Portland African Americans were employed in services. According to one study, "the majority were stewards, waiters, cooks and porters" in the restaurant and hotel industries, which were well represented in Skidmore/Old Town. Others were employed in clothing manufacturing and shoemaking, and in various roles as laborers, boatmen, barbers, domestics, messengers, gardeners, and others. A small number of African Americans owned their own businesses, such as the aforementioned merchant Abner Francis. Others operated boarding houses, restaurants, saloons, and barbershops, often catering to the African-American community. African Americans, like the city's white and Chinese population, also actively participated in the "underworld" economy, in part because many "legitimate" employment opportunities were difficult or impossible to obtain. Much of the vice activity was centered in the "North End" (which included the historic district's northern half), where there was "more racial intermingling; Japanese, French, white and black women were employed as prostitutes in houses, or worked as waitresses and dancers. Black men owned saloons and gambling houses." Sensitive to public perceptions of the city's black community and critical of associations with gambling and prostitution, prominent Portland African-American newspaper publisher and real estate investor Adolphus Griffin commented in 1901 that, "if co-operative associations and business enterprises numbered among us as many as our pleasure clubs, we would be a more important factor in the commercial world."⁹²

Fine new commercial structures continued to rise in the district between 1880 and the turn of the century. The extant buildings dating from this period are not only among the most character-defining in the historic district, but also help to illuminate its social and ethnic history. The four-story Blagen Block (#71) was constructed in 1888 at First and Couch by Danish immigrant Neils (or Nils) J. Blagen, variously described as an architect, contractor and lumberman. It is one of the largest and most significant remaining cast-iron buildings on the West Coast, its impressive 100 feet of Italianate cast-iron street frontage recalling the rhythmic rows of columns and arches that once united numerous block fronts in early Portland. The building was constructed for the W. C. Noon Bag Company, one of the principal canvas manufacturers and distributors on the West Coast, whose tents, awnings, and sails were shipped from Portland to points throughout the West and beyond. In the 1890s, company partner L. F. Osborn, the first president of the Portland Chamber of Commerce and a bank director, expanded its business into building supplies, another important niche in Portland's economy—and one of its few manufacturing strengths—that supported development in the cities, farms and towns of the Far West.

The district saw a number of solid hotel and lodging structures built in this era, adding to and replacing the area's dwindling stock of smaller wooden lodging houses, many of which were in aging, formerly single-family houses. The newer residential structures were multi-storied and included ground-floor retail spaces. The Merchant Hotel (#s 12 and 28) was constructed in 1880 by brothers Louis, Adolphe, and Theodore Nicolai, German immigrants and wealthy pioneer Portland industrialists who operated lumber mills in Beaver Valley and Albina and had established the large Nicolai Brothers Co. (later Nicolai-Neppack Co.) planing mill and door and sash plant that filled the block bounded by First, Second, Everett and Davis in Skidmore/Old Town.

⁹² Elizabeth McLagan, *A Peculiar Paradise: A History of Blacks in Oregon, 1788-1940* (Portland, OR: Georgian Press, 1980), *passim*.

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Expanded in 1884, the Merchant was for a time one of the better Portland hotels, also containing retail and offices. Louis Nicolai's Portland Cracker Co. was housed in the building for a time. It also contained a dance hall and billiard room over the years.⁹³

From about 1904 to the mid-1940s, the Merchant was a central fixture in Portland's vital Japantown (*Nihonmachi*), another rich layer of Skidmore/Old Town's historical and cultural identity. Japanese professional offices, a bathhouse/barber/laundry for Japanese laborers, specialized grocery and dry good shops, and the offices of the Japanese newspaper *Oshu Nippo*, were all located in the building. Renovated in the early 2000s, it currently houses the Oregon Nikkei Legacy Center, a fitting home for this Japanese-American cultural institution.⁹⁴

The S. Ban Company Building (#14), constructed in the early 1890s on NW Third Avenue, housed a hotel on its upper floors, but is most significant for its associations with Shinsaburo Ban, whose offices and general store were located in the building for over three decades. Ban, a former Japanese diplomat, moved to Portland in 1891 and engaged in a number of business enterprises, including lumber milling, ranching, retailing and labor contracting. Aided by his diplomatic and business connections in Japan and excellent command of English, he became one of the most successful Japanese businessmen in the Far West. The S. Ban & Company firm, with branches in Colorado, Wyoming, and Japan, provided thousands of Japanese laborers to railroads, canneries, farms, mines, and other operations across the western states. Assisted by Portland's expanding shipping connections to Japan and running the largest Japanese business in Oregon, Ban was largely responsible for Portland becoming the most important Northwest distribution center for Japanese labor, primarily to the railroads.⁹⁵

Another example of a multi-use hotel building is the Sinnott House (#6), constructed in 1883 on the corner of NW Third and Couch by German-Jewish lawyer, businessman and power-broker Joseph Simon. Simon served as Portland mayor (1877, 1909-1911), state senator (1880-1891, 1895-1898), Republican state chairman (1880-1886), and U.S. Senator (1898-1904). Known as "Little Joe" by his allies and "The Boss" by his opponents, Simon was "clearly the most powerful individual in Oregon politics from 1880 to 1910."⁹⁶ Simon also built and owned the adjacent building at 105 NW Third (#5). Patrick Sinnott, an immigrant from Ireland who came to Portland in 1862, purchased the building (Sinnott House) from Simon in 1892. Sinnott served for 17 years as the Federal Indian Agent for the Grande Ronde Indian Reservation, beginning in 1872. The building served as a hotel for over a century. Its ground floor housed Murphey's Saloon in the 1890s. Some of its upper-story hotel rooms were used as offices, including that of dentist Koyama Kei, who served Japanese and other patients for over 35 years from this location.

The three-story Failing Building (#67) was built in 1883 on the northwest corner of First and Oak by successful merchant-capitalists Henry Failing, former Portland mayor and president of the First National Bank, and Simeon Reed, business partner of William Ladd, principal in the OSNC, and future benefactor of Reed College. Designed by one of the city's most prominent architects, Warren Williams, this well-built masonry and

⁹³ *American Preservation Magazine* (December-January 1978), 30; Lauren Rubin, "Merchant Steeped in City's History, Lore," *Oregonian*, December 8, 2005, "In Portland" section, page 12.

⁹⁴ George Katagiri et al., *Nihonmachi: Portland's Japantown Remembered* (Portland, OR: Oregon Nikkei Legacy Center, 2002), passim.

⁹⁵ Oregon Historical Society, "Shinzaburo Ban," Oregon History Project, <http://www.ohs.org/education/oregonhistory/>; Katagiri, *Nihonmachi*, 4.

⁹⁶ MacColl, *Merchants, Money and Power*, 243-246; Lowenstein, *Jews of Oregon*, 61-63.

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structural iron building finished in stucco and decorative cast iron was built as a wholesale and office facility. Its early tenants included the typical Skidmore/Old Town wholesale firm of Sichel & Mayer, cigar importers, and the J. K. Gill Company, a major Pacific Northwest wholesale and retail stationer, bookseller and publisher and a Portland business fixture well into the late twentieth century.⁹⁷

The 1893 Haseltine Building (#36) was constructed at Pine and Second by merchant, real estate investor and bank officer James E. Haseltine who came to Portland in the early 1880s, after operating a successful hardware business in Portland, Maine, (where he also served on the City Council), and a three year stint mining in California. He soon gained an interest in the established hardware firm of E. J. Northrup & Co., eventually controlling it and reincorporating as the J. E. Haseltine Co. The firm operated out of the Haseltine Building for many years, selling heavy equipment, hardwood lumber and wagon-making materials throughout Oregon, Washington, Idaho, Montana and Northern California.⁹⁸ The structure's rusticated stonework and massive arches exemplify the transition to the new Richardsonian Romanesque vocabulary in Portland's commercial architecture.

Two significant buildings from this era, the 1882 Portland Mariner's Home (#2) and the circa 1889 Seamen's Bethel (#3) on NW Third and Davis, add another dimension to our understanding of Skidmore/Old Town and its role as an international port district. While the district's commercial buildings remind us of one facet of Portland's mercantile economy—the accumulation of wealth and power by successful traders—the Mariners' Home and Seamen's Bethel evoke another—the lives of the maritime laborers upon whom a trade economy depended. These buildings were constructed by the Portland Seamen's Friend Society, formed in 1877 as an affiliate of the American Seamen's Friend Society which was founded in 1826 in New York and dedicated to improving the “social and moral condition of seamen.” In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, sailors were one of the most vulnerable and abused labor forces in the world. Paid low wages and subject to appalling conditions, sailors had fewer rights than most other workers. For instance, under international maritime law, seamen's ability to terminate employment was sharply restricted even under flagrant contract violations and abusive treatment by employers. In 1897 the U.S. Supreme Court affirmed the semi-indentured status of seamen, noting that they were, “deficient in that full and intelligent responsibility for their acts which is accredited to ordinary adults.” Ships which often released their crews while in-port awaiting cargoes, were frequently hard to man and desertions were common. In ports around the world, *crimping*—the semi-legitimate practice of third-party buying and selling of seamen's terms-of-labor (often involving entrapment or forced debt), and *Shanghaiing*—essentially kidnapping and enslavement—were regularly used to crew ocean vessels. This system was widely decried but well-established, and it implicitly involved the collaboration of ship captains, traders, port officials, lodging house and saloon operators, and a cadre of professional and often criminal employment brokers known as “crimps.” The Columbia River ports of Astoria and Portland suffered a particularly “vile reputation on an international scale,” with Portland's notorious crimps such as Bunco Kelly and Jim Turk becoming the stuff of legend.⁹⁹

The Portland Seamen's Friend Society was organized to address the worst of these practices and to provide services to sailors and longshoremen, such as safe housing, meals, reading material, sermonizing, and advocacy. Prominent merchants and businessmen serving on its board included Henry Corbett, Donald Macleay, William Ladd, Rodney Glisan, James Steel and Edward Quackenbush. Like most charitable organizations of the time, it had a decidedly Christian orientation as well as a healthy dose of temperance. Their first chapel, kitchen,

⁹⁷ Hawkins, *Grand Era*, 150.

⁹⁸ Gaston, *Portland*, Vol. II, 150-156.

⁹⁹ Denise Alborn, “Crimping and Shanghaiing on the Columbia River,” *OHS Quarterly* 93, no. 3 (Fall 1992): 262-291.

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reading room and chaplain's quarters were housed in a wooden structure relocated to the Third and Davis site in 1879 (the former Gem Saloon building, portions of which may have been incorporated in the existing Seamen's Bethel structure). In a report to the national organization, Portland's chaplain Richard Gilpin noted that in 1887 he had preached at Bethel 142 times to 3,478 individuals, visited 114 ships a total of 358 times and conducted Bible study and singing classes. He also stated that "forty apprentices and sailors signed the teetotal pledge," an altogether low, if perhaps unsurprising, success rate, given the hard-drinking reputation of his mariner flock."¹⁰⁰ A central concern of the Portland Seamen's Friend Society was the abusive elements of crimping. After working for several years to raise funds from Portland's leading businessmen and the likes of international rail magnate Henry Villard and Liverpool grain trader and shipping tycoon W. A. Guthrie, the society built a "Mariners' Home," on the site in 1882, providing a safer and more respectable alternative to the many suspect sailors' lodging houses that were frequently complicit in crimping and Shanghaiing. An addition was completed around 1889. However, the society was unable to manage its debt and was forced to rent-out portions of the building and eventually sell it. The structure housed the Portland Hospital for a time circa 1890 and later the California Lodging House on its upper floors with various retail uses in the storefronts below. The buildings stand today, highlighting Skidmore/Old Town's early role in providing transient housing and other "social services" oriented to the international maritime labor force that supported the city's critical shipping functions.¹⁰¹

Effects of Flooding

In the 1880s and 1890s Skidmore Old/Town was a vital commercial area and central to downtown's urban fabric. A visitor in the early '80s found that Front Street's impressive brick and cast-iron houses created a "metropolitan appearance unlooked for in a place of this size."¹⁰² The area's waterfront location, although still fundamental to the city's economic viability, was slowly becoming more of a liability, however. By 1903, Portland had experienced at least five major floods and numerous lesser ones since its founding. The flood of 1894 covered 250 square blocks, swept away wharves and warehouses, ruptured gas and sewer lines, and washed away impermanent pavements such as wood and macadam. On Front Street, the floodwaters inundated the first floors of all its establishments. Boat traffic on city streets was brisk, however, and some enterprising merchants made the best of it. August Erickson, proprietor of the famous saloon on NW Second Avenue (#31) boasting the longest bar in the world (684 feet), "rented a houseboat and stocked it full of booze and other necessities for his thirsty customers... Row boats, homemade crafts, catamarans and canoes brought customers to the floating saloon... Some of the customers never left the floating saloon until the waters receded and they were broke."¹⁰³

Illustrative of the deleterious effects of flooding on the district's fortunes over time is the story of Bernard Freimann's upscale restaurant and catering business located at the corner of First and Oak (#84, #89). Ben Freimann (AKA Ben Freeman) was an internationally prominent and peripatetic linguist, real estate speculator, hotelier, diplomat, spy, and all-around adventurer in the Victorian mold. Well-connected to Portland's power brokers and financial leaders, he earned one of his many and transient fortunes in an East Portland and Albina

¹⁰⁰ "Portland, Ore., Seamen's Friend Society," *Sailors' Magazine* 60, no. 7 (July 1888): 199-201.

¹⁰¹ Portland Seamen's Friend Society Records, Oregon Historical Society; Seamen's Abuses: Pamphlets, Scrap Books and Letters on Seamen's Abuses at Astoria and Portland, Wilson Room, Multnomah County Library, Oregon; "Portland Seamen's Bethel," *Daily Oregonian*, September 13, 1880.

¹⁰² Olive Rand, *A Vacation Excursion*, 1884, 133, quoted in Pomeroy, *Pacific Slope*, 138.

¹⁰³ E. Kimbark MacColl, *The Shaping of a City: Business and Politics in Portland, Oregon 1885-1915* (Portland: The Georgian Press, 1976), 170.

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development syndicate of the 1870s that included prominent Portland businessmen William D. Ladd, Henry Failing and Harvey Scott. Returning to Portland in 1885 after an absence, he opened “The New Freimann Coffee House and Restaurant” in a new brick building located at 11 Oak Street (now 79 SW Oak, #84). He had operated a similar venture in 1875 on Washington Street. It was perhaps Portland’s most prominent restaurant, serving the city’s most distinguished citizens and visitors. He expanded into the adjacent building and established a successful catering business. In 1886 he hosted a banquet for world-famous French actress Sarah Bernhardt, who was in town to dedicate the new (uptown) Marquam Theater. Bernhardt had heard of Freimann’s excellent reputation and made many demands, but, according to Freimann, upon tasting his *pâté de sauté de foie de volaille* “went into hysterics. Tears of joy ran down her cheeks.”¹⁰⁴

However, disaster struck with the flood of 1890 leaving “nothing but desolation and dirt” in his building after the water receded. His wealthy friends ensured that he received the loans needed to rebuild his business. But when the even more devastating flood of 1892 struck, dislodging the building from its foundation and destroying his restaurant, saloon, kitchens and wine cellar, Freimann was unable to pay his debts. He turned over all his property to his creditors, including his Portland home, ocean-front property, and undeveloped land in Albina, and moved to Honolulu. Old Town was clearly a difficult place to operate a business at times, and increasingly businesses not dependant on proximity to the waterfront chose to locate elsewhere, when they had the means to do so.

The Skidmore Fountain

One of the most significant and symbolically rich resources in Skidmore/Old Town, indeed all of Portland, is the fountain for which the district is named. Erected in 1888 just north of the New Market Theater, it was Portland’s first piece of public art and remains one of its finest. The idea for the fountain had its genesis in a bequest from druggist, businessman and City Councilman Stephen Skidmore, whose father Andrew had operated a store and hotel in the district beginning in 1849. Skidmore had left \$5,000 to the city, specifying in his will that it be used for “the erection of a Drinking Fountain to be placed in such public place as the City authorities may direct.” The popular notion that it was intended for “men, horses and dogs” was expressed in contemporary newspapers and has been perpetuated in many accounts over the years, but Skidmore’s actual bequest is silent on this issue.¹⁰⁵

Taking up the cause, pioneer merchant and former mayor Henry Failing consulted with prominent and somewhat bohemian lawyer Charles Erskine Scott Wood about an appropriate design for the fountain. Rejecting several initial ideas, they agreed that the fountain deserved to be a civic monument of the first order and required the “very best” artist they could find. Wood, a celebrated and well-connected poet and painter in his own right, contacted two of the most highly esteemed sculptors in the country, Olin Warner and Augustus Saint-Gaudens. Saint-Gaudens was too busy to accept the commission, but Warner accepted. Such talent did not come cheap; final design and fabrication in New York and Philadelphia would cost \$18,000. Failing raised the additional \$13,000 from among the city’s well-to-do, including a large, unspecified sum from banker Tyler Woodward, who conditioned his gift with the proviso that the fountain be placed opposite a parcel he owned on First Street. It was an appropriate location, however, located as it was in the center of the old business district. The City vacated a 23-foot space for the fountain at the intersection of First, Vine and Ankeny, putting it in the

¹⁰⁴ Professor Freeman [Bernard Freimann], *Freeman of Stamboul: Being the Memoirs of Professor Freeman* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1934), 219.

¹⁰⁵ Donald J. Sterling Jr. “Skidmore Really Didn’t Rank Women below Horses, Dogs,” *Oregonian*, October 9, 1987; Charles Erskine Scott Wood, “The Skidmore Fountain,” *Oregon Historical Quarterly* (June 1933): 97-102.

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center of a unique, irregularly shaped open area where the streets of the original Portland plat meet at an offset those of Couch's Addition. Warner came to Portland to inspect the site to ensure that the fountain was designed in "proper scale and harmony" with its surroundings. The exceptional space the fountain occupies remains among the city's most intimately urban and charming.

Executed in bronze and orange-hued granite, the classically inflected fountain's shallow top-basin is supported by a pair of caryatids flanking an ionic column rising from a wider octagonal pool. The elegant fountain was immediately hailed as a masterpiece, both locally and nationally. *Century* magazine noted in 1889 that there was "nothing so beautiful in statuary westward of Chicago." Art critic W. C. Brownell stated in *Scribner's* in 1896 that the fountain represented "the high mark of American imaginative sculpture."¹⁰⁶

The historical significance of the Skidmore Fountain for Portland and Skidmore/Old Town is multi-faceted. As a nationally recognized piece of public art, it symbolizes the city's coming of age as a major urban center. To Portland's late nineteenth-century citizens it was a source of civic pride, that, like the New Market Theater 15 years earlier, announced that Portland was at last worthy of inclusion among the ranks of the nation's culturally sophisticated cities. However, some contemporary remarks about the fountain reveal the "East Coast" bias typically leveled against "upstart" Western cities that, ironically, projects like the Skidmore Fountain were intended to counter. For instance, the New York *Tribune*, commenting about the work when it was first previewed in New York, praised the fountain itself, but bemoaned that it was intended "for a western city with its bewhiskered, bepistoled lot of frontiersmen."¹⁰⁷ W. C. Brownell might have found it "the high mark" in American sculpture, but he also wrote: "the fact that Warner's figures look calmly down upon buggies and buck-boards, and shirt-sleeves and slouch hats in Oregon, instead of decorating [New York's] Central Park, is grotesquely significant of much."¹⁰⁸ Such remarks, and the indignant responses from Portlanders, evoke a historical sensitivity to the judgments of outsiders that is sometimes still evident in Portland today.

If the fountain was in one sense a crowning cultural achievement for Portland, its completion in 1888 corresponds more-or-less with the city's zenith as *the* metropolis of the Northwest, a status it was beginning to lose to faster growing Seattle. So too, its siting "downtown" in the center of the ageing first business district seems, in hindsight, a bit ironic, as the action was increasingly heading "uptown," away from the fountain and the district itself. If the fountain is today no longer in the physical center of downtown, it retains its symbolic status as a cultural landmark central to Portland's civic identity. C. E. S. Wood's words inscribed on its base, "Good citizens are the riches of a city," continue to resonate with Portlanders, evoking not only Stephen Skidmore's gift to the city and those of other wealthy Portlanders, but the high level of civic engagement for which Portland's citizens are nationally known.

Downtown Moves Uptown, 1900 – 1929

The first quarter of the twentieth century in Portland was marked by enormous changes, many driven by technological advances in moving goods and people that swept much of the country. In this era the automobile came into its own as the preferred form of personal transportation. Between 1910 and 1926, six new auto-accommodating bridges spanned the Willamette. Ever-larger cargo ships spurred improvements to the Columbia and Willamette shipping channels and the construction of large, publicly-owned dock facilities in the lower Willamette Harbor area, south of downtown. In 1929, Portland's first commercial airport was

¹⁰⁶ Snyder, *Skidmore's Portland*, 134.

¹⁰⁷ Joe Bianco, "Famed Fountain," *Oregonian*, April 5, 1964, 10.

¹⁰⁸ Snyder, *Skidmore's Portland*, 134.

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established.

Portland continued to grow. Between 1900 and 1910, Portland's population more than doubled in size from 90,424 to 207,214. By the 1920s, almost fifty square miles of land on the east side of the Willamette River had been added to the City since 1891, housing over 70 percent of the city's population. Many historians have linked Portland's growth in this period to its successful efforts to promote the city and region nationally and internationally. The booster spirit of nineteenth-century "upstart towns", to use Daniel Boorstin's phrase, was clearly evident during Portland's first half century, from the promotional writings of the *West Shore* magazine, to the more ambiguous intermingling of public and private interests evident in the efforts by the city's leading capitalists to bring railroads to Portland. However, the epitome of Portland's boosterism was undoubtedly the 1905 Lewis and Clark Centennial Exposition and Oriental Fair. Touted as celebrating the centennial of the Lewis and Clark Expedition's foray into the Oregon Country, the extravagant event used a nostalgic veil of history to promote regional investment and American imperialist ideals. Erected amidst a marshy lagoon on the northwestern outskirts of the city, attractions included sentimental statuary evoking the values of Manifest Destiny, a basilica-like edifice constructed of old growth logs, and even Venetian canals.¹⁰⁹

The fair was a rousing success from the perspective of Portland's political and economic elite, who had pulled the event together, for a decade-long economic boom followed the fair, with an influx of new residents in the growing eastside "streetcar suburbs" and massive private investment in new downtown commercial buildings. However, the boom did not affect all parts of the City equally. Although new construction occurred in Skidmore/Old Town, Portland's central business district continued to shift south and west, away from the flood-prone, rough-and-ready waterfront—and the Skidmore/Old Town district. As the era of the skyscraper dawned (or, perhaps more accurately in Portland, the era of the proto-skyscraper), the city's newest, tallest, and most modern buildings were being sited farther "uptown," reflecting and precipitating a number of changes in the district.

Spatial Shifts in the Central Business District

While it had always had a large share of the city's bread-and-butter wholesale, distribution and transportation services, Skidmore/Old Town had also been a part of the city's financial/office district, with its banks, lawyers, notaries, and insurance agents, as well as higher-end retail operations that serviced them, such as restaurants, hotels and tailors. However, in the early twentieth century, high rent-paying office and retail businesses began moving to newer and more fashionable uptown buildings and locations, increasing the overall proportion of manufacturing, wholesale and warehousing activities in Old Town. This shift was driven by a number of positive and negative locational factors, ranging from the desire for more distance from the working waterfront to the real estate premium and high status of close proximity to important civic buildings, such as city hall and courthouses, sited to the south and west. For instance, in 1907, Wells, Fargo completed what is commonly considered Portland's first "skyscraper," a twelve-story commercial tower west of the district at Sixth and Oak into which moved Wells Fargo itself and the offices of the Oregon Railway and Navigation Company (successor to the Oregon Steam Navigation Company), two major corporations long associated with Skidmore/Old Town. The international grain trading firm of Balfour Guthrie, which had a long-standing presence in Portland, built its new corporate office well away from the waterfront at SW Stark and Sixth in 1916. Construction of increasingly large downtown commercial buildings is illustrated on Map MO2, which charts patterns of "vertical density" (i.e. building heights) in 1879 and 1908 and clearly shows the westward and

¹⁰⁹ See Abbott, *The Great Extravaganza: Portland and the Lewis and Clark Exposition* (Portland, OR: Oregon Historical Society Press, 2004).

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southward shift of the Central Business District's center of gravity away from Skidmore/Old Town and the riverfront.

The upper floors of many structures, once occupied by office activities, were increasingly used for storage and warehousing. In some cases upper floors, whether once offices or warehouses were converted to low-end, sub-standard lodgings. The formerly vital wharves were used less and began to decay, as the city's port activities shifted away from the older, smaller, and privately-owned downtown docks to larger and more modern down-river shipping facilities, including the new publicly-owned municipal terminals, proximate to large tracts of land suited for industrial expansion. Construction of the now numerous downtown Willamette River bridges had made it more difficult for vessels to access the wharves of Skidmore/Old Town and the upper harbor and ever-larger ocean ships increasingly found the narrower width of the river in the downtown insufficient for maneuvering and turning.

While First Street continued to have a retail orientation, it was no longer Portland's preeminent shopping area. In 1915, First Street retailers organized a booster group, the First Street Progressive Men's Association, to reinvigorate the area, its president lamenting that, "we don't deny that the city has moved away from us."¹¹⁰

Mirroring a national trend in which hotel living became increasingly less "respectable," many of the district's older hotels lost prestige and served a more transient and working-class clientele, although several new residential hotels built after the turn of the century maintained good reputations for a time. However, residential hotels, now often referred to as "Single Room Occupancy" hotels, were suspect in the eyes of many along with the district's lodging and boarding houses. Built in 1911, the Foster Hotel at 216 NW Third Avenue (#11) was a solid and dignified structure but its 180 small rooms lacked private bathing facilities. In the 1930s it housed Japanese workers and a Judo parlor. The Norton House (#55), located at First and Couch, had been heralded by *West Shore* magazine at the time of its opening in 1877 noting that it possessed "all the modern conveniences." But, as its current heritage plaque notes, it "may have had difficulty maintaining a first class hotel status, surrounded ... by sailors' saloons, laundries, heavy industry and houses of ribald reputation."

Notwithstanding notable changes in the early twentieth century, patterns of continuity in the district's character and functions are also evident, including its ongoing critical place in the city's economic geography. Many of its trade and manufacturing businesses continued to prosper, evidenced by major investments in new structures. In 1903, the George Lawrence Company completed an elegant quarter-block, four-story building at First and Oak, designed by the prominent architectural firm of Whidden and Lewis (#85). Described in 1905 as a "wholesale manufacturer of harnesses and saddlery" and "importers and jobbers of saddlery, hardware, leather, whips and robes," the company had deep roots in the district. Founded in 1857 by pioneer Samuel Sherlock, who operated a saddlery and leather shop at 52 Front Street, the company thrived under the leadership of Sherlock's brother-in-law George Lawrence from 1876 to 1922, reportedly employing as many as 250 workers during World War I. In response to the decline of horse-driven transportation, they expanded their product line in the 1920s to include auto supplies and other products although their now-legendary gun belts and holsters continued to be signature products until the business was sold in the 1980s. Occupying the First Street building until 1985, the George Lawrence Company's longevity over more than a century illustrates the historical continuity of Skidmore/Old Town's commercial and industrial economy and its adaptability to broad social and

¹¹⁰ "Prosperity Nicknames Old Business Thoroughfare Easy Street—No Depression," clipping from unknown 1915 newspaper, Vertical File "Portland Streets," Oregon Historical Society, Portland (hereafter cited as OHS). See also Chris Sawyer, *From White Chapel to Old Town: The Life and Death of the Skid Row District, Portland, Oregon* (PhD diss., Portland State University, 1985), 212.

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economic changes.¹¹¹

In this period, the Chinese and Japanese communities continued to be perhaps the most recognizable ethnic groups within the district, but new groups added to the ethnic mix. In the early twentieth century, Portland's Greek population grew rapidly. In 1900, the census listed only six heads-of-household within Multnomah County who were born in Greece; by 1910 the number had grown to 921, with the area along and near lower Burnside forming an important residential and commercial nucleus for the community. The Maletis Brothers Grocery Store, located first in the building that now houses the Oregon Leather Company (#40) and later in the Estate Hotel (# 13), opened circa 1917 by Greek immigrants James, Peter and Chris Maletis. It served not only the North End's growing Greek population and the large number of Greek sailors that passed through, but also catered to other ethnic groups. James Maletis' daughter Mary, who worked there beginning as a small girl, noted in 1979 that, "Our shelf stock has always reflected the neighborhood. Besides Greek we've had every kind of food from Scandinavian to Japanese."¹¹²

Vice, Social Services, and Labor: the Emergence of Skid Road

As a waterfront area, Skidmore/Old Town had long had its share of activities that affronted the nineteenth-century bourgeois morals shared by many of Portland's citizens and leaders. As the city's spatial organization became more hierarchical and its land uses more segregated, "high culture," once epitomized by the New Market Theater, moved away from the district and "vice" operations—brothels, saloons, gambling halls, arcades, dance halls, etc.—became more concentrated, or at least more prominent in what was known as the "North End."¹¹³ Historian Gloria Myers describes the area (also sometimes called "White Chapel" after London's notorious red light district) in the first decade of the twentieth century:

The North End district boasted the usual features of western port cities. Merchant seamen, traveling salesmen, loggers, farm hands and soldiers from the nearby Vancouver Barracks strolled the cobbled streets in search of a "good time." Blocks of shanty "cribs," which ... were rented to individual prostitutes "for \$15 a week," coexisted with grand bordellos housing dozens of "sporting women." ... The "favorite combination," according to a contemporary [1913] survey on vice abatement, was "a saloon, a grill, and a house of prostitution, all in the same building, same block, or immediate vicinity."¹¹⁴

Of particular notoriety was the block bounded by Second and Third, and Couch and Burnside, known as the "blazing center," described by an *Oregon Journal* writer: "Here were the Erickson, Fritz and Blazier saloons, with the House of all Nations opposite Erickson's on the northeast corner of Second and Burnside. Lights glared, music blared, chips rattled and glasses clinked from dark till the milkman made his rounds."¹¹⁵

¹¹¹ Donald R. Nelson, *Progressive Portland II: Stop and Go* (Portland: Donald Nelson, 2006), 20-21; George Lawrence Co., <http://www.vintagegunleather.com/companyhistories.htm>; 1865 *Portland City Directory*.

¹¹² Ryan, *Burnside: A Community*, 1979, 18; Sara Cox, Maletis Brothers Grocery Store, <http://www.oldtown.pdx.edu/maletis.htm>.

¹¹³ Just as the current historic district's boundaries do not conform precisely to Portland's "first downtown," neither do they conform to the area once referred to as the North End, which was generally north of Burnside Street stretching from the waterfront west through New Chinatown to the North Park Blocks.

¹¹⁴ Gloria E. Meyers, *A Municipal Mother: Portland's Lola Greene Baldwin, America's First Policewoman* (Corvallis, Oregon: Oregon State University Press, 1995), 93. Meier's less-scholarly book, *Those Naughty Ladies of the Old Northwest*, contains interesting anecdotal accounts of prostitution in early Portland. For an in depth study of the North End as a vice district and skid road see Sawyer, *From Whitechapel to Old Town*.

¹¹⁵ MacColl, *Merchants, Money, and Power*, 342

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Erickson's Saloon (# 31), the "Workingmen's Club" as its sign declared, was founded in the 1880s and gained fame for its 684-foot bar and legendary free lunch. In 1913, Gus Erickson sold the saloon building to Fred Fritz, owner of the adjacent Fritz Theater, a notorious burlesque house tied to gambling and prostitution. Fritz razed several buildings on the block, built new structures incorporating some of the previous structures and reestablished the "blazing center's" saloon, theater and hotel businesses.¹¹⁶ It is unclear whether the block's lively reputation was changed much by the new digs.

Illustrative of efforts of Old Town businesses to bolster the perception of the area was a 1914 plan to illuminate every intersection on Third Avenue. From Yamhill Street north through the Skidmore/Old Town neighborhood to Glisan Street, a series of imposing luminated arches were built with the intention of luring commerce back toward the river. Reminiscent of medieval groin vaults and recalling the 1905 Fair's impressive displays of decorative outdoor lighting, the structures were glowing downtown icons until their removal in the 1930s for what was considered more practical lighting.¹¹⁷

Contemporaries clearly viewed Old Town as suffering from a decline in fortune and status. From a broader historical perspective, the changes in the area exemplify significant shifts in urban spatial organization seen in the downtowns of trade-centered, waterfront cities across the West and the nation. Urban geographer Larry Ford describes the typical conversion of historical city cores into "zones of discard" as the "peak land value intersection"¹¹⁸ moved over time from the "semi-industrial chaos of the waterfront, with its flood hazards and congestion, to an area on higher ground which was once a zone of better residences."¹¹⁹ The older zone of discard, better known as "Skid Road" or "Skid Row", with its aging and underutilized building stock and marginalized population of the down-and-out, became a defining feature of the twentieth century city.¹²⁰ By mid-century, Portland's Skid Road came to encompass all of the original waterfront downtown—with Skidmore/Old Town at the center (see Map MO3).¹²¹

Despite, on the one hand, contemporary concerns about the district's decline and the growing impetus to redevelop and "improve" it that would eventually result in the demolition of many historic structures, Skidmore/Old Town, as a part of Portland's Skid Road, served important functions within the social, cultural and economic ecologies of the city and the region. Its transient housing, employment agencies, popular entertainment venues, aid societies, missions, and labor organizations served the northwest's large itinerant working population—the loggers, mill workers, miners, farm hands and other workers who seasonally migrated to large urban centers in search of their next job or a place to spend their "stake." Portland's status as a major urban hub with a burgeoning economy and developed transportation linkages, in combination with

¹¹⁶ Historic Preservation Certification Application—Part 1 Erickson's Hotel, dated September 10, 1982; In City of Portland, Land Use Review file HLDZ 2-83. See also Stewart Holbrook, "Erickson's: Elbow Bending for Giants," in *Wildmen, Wobblies and Whistle Punks: Stewart Holbrook's Lowbrow Northwest*, ed. Brian Booth (Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 1992), 217-222.

¹¹⁷ Catherine Sohm, *A History of Street Lighting in Portland, Oregon* (Portland: The City of Portland, Office of Transportation, 1997) 9.

¹¹⁸ Essentially, it is the area of highest land values, typically within the CBD, and theoretically a function of high accessibility and maximum opportunity for interaction and economic transaction.

¹¹⁹ Larry Ford, *Cities and Buildings: Skyscrapers, Skid Rows, and Suburbs* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), 64-65.

¹²⁰ The older term "Skid Road" is used here in preference to the increasingly more common "Skid Row," reflecting western states usage and the original reference to logging roads paved with tree trunks, or skids, and, by association, the area of a town where loggers congregated, usually a rough neighborhood or red-light district.

¹²¹ Donald J. Bogue, *Skid Row in American Cities* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1963), 35.

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Skidmore/Old Town's geographic centrality, numerous potential employers, and constant stream of newcomers, made the district a logical center of gravity for employment offices, labor organizations, and other institutions and activities that supported or were supported by the working classes and other vulnerable elements of society. The aforementioned Mariners' Home and Seamen's Bethel (#2, #3) which served the needs of maritime labor are early examples that recall aspects of these critical social functions. Places like Erickson's Saloon (#31) or Fred Fritz' hotel/theater/saloon operations (#18), as venues for "vices" such as gambling and prostitution—activities that clearly have socially corrosive effects—are perhaps more problematic examples. However, saloons, burlesque theaters, shooting galleries, billiard halls and the like were important institutions that provided social spaces for "working stiff" and others who were not welcome at the uptown Arlington Club or Ben Freimann's upscale restaurant on nearby First and Oak (#89, #84). They were places of relief and fellowship (and occasional danger) but also supplied valuable services, such as inexpensive meals, informal banking and mail delivery, that were not otherwise available to the chronically underemployed, homeless and stigmatized (see Map MO5).

With the rise of radical labor movements around the turn of the century, groups like the International Workers of the World, or Wobblies, found a natural home in Skidmore/Old Town, among the northwest's growing "special labor force, the mobile and deracinated, upon which the expanding industries of the region more and more depended."¹²² One of the earliest Wobbly Halls on the West Coast was opened in 1907 in the ground floor of the hotel on the northwest corner of West Burnside and Third Avenue (demolished).¹²³ From here, the first Wobbly-led strike in the Pacific Northwest was coordinated, with 2,000 mill workers walking out and shutting down all of the city's lumber mills and many of the Columbia Region's logging camps in March 1907.¹²⁴

Portland's Wobbly Halls (another was probably located in the district circa 1919 in the Rich Hotel on North Second Street (#29), another at 222-224 West Burnside (#20), and the 1910 City Directory shows an IWW Reading Room at 33 North Fourth Street) were "more than mere union halls. They served as social clubs, dormitories, mess halls and mail drops." Portland's most famous radical John Reed (the only American buried in the Kremlin) noted that "wherever...there is an IWW local, you will find an intellectual center—a place where men read philosophy, economics, the latest plays, novels; where art and poetry are discussed, and international politics. In my native place, Portland, Oregon, the IWW hall was the liveliest intellectual center in town."¹²⁵

Other unions had their headquarters in the district, including the Marine Workers Industrial Union (MWIU), housed in the Foster Hotel (#11). A radical, communist-led organization formed as an alternative to what was

¹²² Robert Tyler, *Rebels of the Woods: The I.W.W. in the Pacific Northwest* (Eugene: University of Oregon Books, 1967), 31.

¹²³ Sources consulted are conflicting on the location of the first IWW hall. Shawn Lingo places it in the hotel on the northwest corner of West Burnside and Third, a structure that was only recently demolished and was the only contributing structure demolished in the district since its nomination to the National Register. Michael Munk places it at 493 West Burnside, a street address not currently in use but presumably indicating the 1907 Grove Hotel (401-439 W. Burnside, just outside Skidmore/Old Town in the New Chinatown/Japan Town Historic District). Photos in the City Archives from 1928 show a Wobbly Hall on the second floor of the noncontributing building across Burnside (#20) from the Wax Building (#19). Shawn Lingo, "The IWW and the Disappearance of Portland's Working Class Cultural Landscape or Floppin' in the Hall," *The Journal of the Associated Students for Historic Preservation* 18, no. 1 (Spring 2005): 6,7; Michael Munk, *The Portland Red Guide: Sites & Stories of Our Radical Past* (Portland: Ooligan Press, 2007).

¹²⁴ Tyler, *Rebels*, 54-55

¹²⁵ John Reed, *Liberator*, September 1918, as quoted in Franklin Rosemount, *Joe Hill: The IWW & the Making of a Revolutionary Workingclass Counterculture* (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr, 2003), 34.

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seen as the conservatism and corruption of the International Longshoremen's Association, the MWIU was active in the great Maritime Strike of 1934 that rocked West Coast ports, including Portland, where "special police" deputized by Mayor Carson fired on picket lines and wounded four workers.¹²⁶

An important focal point for Portland and West Coast radicalism was jeweler Tom Burns's activist bookstore "The Clock Shop" (the signage read "Clocks-Jewelry-Read-Think-Learn") located on Burnside between North Third and Fourth and later in the Wax Building at Burnside and North Third (#19). Here one could borrow books by Karl Marx and Eugene Debs from the lending library in the basement, buy the latest issue of *The Masses* for a dime, or pick up Burns's own leftist newsletter, *FAX*, which attacked, among others, Portland's "political parasites—the first families like the Corbetts, Labbes, Wilcoxes—coupon clipping clowns that never did a useful day's work in the worthless lives." Active in the socialist and labor movements from before World War I until the 1950s, Burns was an icon of the city's radical scene and was known as the "Mayor of Burnside."¹²⁷

In 1946, after the fiery radicalism of the first half of the century had waned, Stewart Holbrook evoked the deep symbolic association between radicalized labor and the Skidmore/Old Town area when he described Arthur Boose, the "last of the Wobbly paper boys" hawking the *Industrial Worker*, as he had for two decades, on the corner of Third and Burnside, in the "most celebrated Skidroad in Oregon, or on Earth."¹²⁸

Surviving "Civic Improvements:" Demolition, Adaptation and Preservation, 1929 – the Present

"Portland's almost last link with the dusty past is about to go. The ornate façaded fronts of Front Avenue Buildings will fall to the wrecker's zeal, and in their place will rise the austere severity of modern architecture. The cobblestones of the narrow streets will disappear under the paving of the new super-highway, and the last gas-mantle lamp will metamorphize into neon. So look your last, Portland, as old Front Avenue goes glimmering. A new day is coming! –Oregon Journal, May 11, 1941."¹²⁹

Before the 1920s, periodic flooding, the loss of shipping activities, and other economic and social trends contributed to the decline of Front and First streets as preeminent commercial streets and Skidmore/Old Town as an economically vital part of the downtown. With construction of the new Burnside Bridge in 1926, the pace of change quickened. West Burnside Street was widened for several blocks requiring major alterations to commercial buildings at the center of the historic district, many being essentially chopped in half. The widening also increased Burnside's role as a major east-west thoroughfare and as an attractive location for automobile sale and service businesses. Its left-turn restrictions and elevated bridge ramps, which completely passed over Front and First Avenues, complicated and reduced access to Skidmore/Old Town, further isolating it from the rest of downtown and constricting its attractiveness as a retail and office district. A direct result of the rapid rise and popularity of the automobile, the new bridge symbolized the transition of the nineteenth-century village, horse and pedestrian-accommodating street plan towards twentieth-century automobile-centered layouts. Less than forty years earlier, Olin Warner had sculpted the Skidmore Fountain in a

¹²⁶ Munk, *Portland Red Guide*, 99, 101.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 105, 126-127.

¹²⁸ Stewart Holbrook, "The Last of the Wobblies," in *Wildmen, Wobblies and Whistle Punks: Stewart Holbrook's Lowbrow Northwest*, ed. Brian Booth (Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 1992), 295-304.

¹²⁹ Quoted in Hawkins, *Grand Era*, 21.

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diminutive size allowing it to better harmonize with the surrounding two- and three-story structures that were the city's norm. The Burnside Bridge dwarfed not only the fountain, but the buildings themselves, as this characteristically twentieth-century piece of urban infrastructure loomed-over and bypassed half the neighborhood.¹³⁰ Suffering a symbolic indignity, a one-way traffic sign was actually affixed to the fountain itself for a time.

The Burnside Bridge project was just the first of a wave of large-scale public works projects and accompanying building demolitions that significantly altered the physical and economic fabric of the district. Following in succession, four major infrastructure projects further impacted the district. These were: 1) constructing a river seawall and sewer interceptor; 2) widening Front Street, extending bridge approaches and constructing Harbor Drive, necessitating removal of all remaining buildings east of Front Street; 3) removing Harbor Drive in order to create a landscaped waterfront esplanade; and 4) constructing light-rail transit (LRT), which brought about changes to sidewalks and traffic patterns.¹³¹

The construction of a seawall and major sewer interceptor in 1929 along the Willamette River, extending 5,400 feet from NW Glisan Street (three blocks north of the district) to SW Jefferson Street (ten blocks south of the district) helped bring an end to the periodic flooding that had plagued Portland's waterfront areas for nearly 80 years (major dam projects on the Columbia River also reduced flooding). However, the project also necessitated the removal of the by-then decaying wharves of waterfront buildings along the east side of Front Street—structures once central to the district's and the city's economic vitality and civic identity. Marking the end of the period of significance, the completion of the seawall in 1929 physically and symbolically severed the district's connection to the Willamette River. While many of Skidmore/Old Town's businesses would continue to be directed towards wholesale trade and industrial activity, a once fundamentally river-oriented trade district had lost the greater part of its marine infrastructure. In addition, 1929 saw the beginnings of the Great Depression which ushered in a period of stagnation not only in Skidmore/Old Town but throughout the nation.

In 1939, the "Front Street Project" was launched, ultimately resulting in not only a widened Front Street but the six-lane Harbor Drive expressway along the seawall with underpasses at all bridges. Before construction could take place, 79 buildings had to be demolished. The project included a concrete esplanade along the top of the seawall and "a narrow strip of park land" between Front Avenue and Harbor Drive.¹³² This project, completed in 1943, forced the removal of a large percentage of buildings at the easterly edge of the Skidmore/Old Town Historic District—the last of the districts wharves and waterfront tradehouses on the east side of Front were gone forever. Few people at the time would have been able to predict that the expressway itself would be removed thirty years later for another civic undertaking - construction of Waterfront Park - which now defines the easterly edge of the district.

Private property owners were also beginning to raze the district's historic structures, beginning in 1928 with the 1867 Bank of British Columbia, a flat-iron style building adjacent to the Skidmore Fountain inaugurating a nearly three-decade long period of demolition for Portland's neglected cast-iron structures. In most cases, surface parking lots replaced the demolished buildings—many such lots remain today—further evidence of the car's dominance and economic conditions in the district which apparently did not make new construction

¹³⁰ William J. Hawkins, III, "Befriending Your Cast Iron District."

¹³¹ E. Kimbark MacColl, *The Growth of a City: Power and Politics in Portland, Oregon, 1915-1950* (Portland: The Georgian Press, 1979) 315.

¹³² Lansing, *Portland*, 335; MacColl, *Growth of a City*, 529; Allen-McMath-Hawkins Architects, *Development Program, Skidmore Old Town Historic District* (Portland: Prepared for the Portland Development Commission, 1976), 5.

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attractive.

There is evidence that some citizens appreciated the “romantic” qualities of the early commercial district; a 1930 article in the *Oregonian* had stated: “It is not generally known in our city of Portland—by all accounts the oldest and most individual city in the northwest—that we have here, in the morning’s ramble or a leisurely survey from an automobile, a street drenched with pioneer associations which will please the eye and intrigue the memories of old days.”¹³³ But times had changed and there was no organized opposition from voters or civic groups to the demolition activities, although one observer likened the destruction wrought by the Harbor Drive project to the London Blitz.¹³⁴ New auto-accommodating public policies and development were in fact widely supported; even demolitions to create new surface lots were regarded as good economic sense—realtor Chester A. Moores stating in 1939, “If older buildings that are losing money were torn down and new ground areas made available for parking spaces, the remaining office buildings would reap...advantage.”¹³⁵

Beginning in the 1960s, however, preservation advocacy, policy shifts and public and private investment, slowed the demolition trend. Pioneering Portland preservationists, such as George McMath, Bill Hawkins, and Gregg Sutton rallied around Old Town’s historic buildings, raised public awareness, organized a “Friends of Cast Iron” group and succeeded in landmarking key structures and creating a historic district by the mid-1970s. Preservation, renovation and rehabilitation took their place as urban planning and development tools in the district. Early noteworthy restoration and rehabilitation projects, many under the auspices of Bill Naito, that raised the district’s profile and set the stage for future reinvestments, included the Globe Hotel/Import Plaza conversion (1963, #70) and restoration work on the Smith Block/Railway Building (early 1960s and 1978, #96, #78). In the 1980s and early 1990s, a fresh round of rehabilitation and restoration occurred, including the Blagen Block (1983, #71), the George Lawrence Building (1985, #85), the Reed Building (1985, #74), the New Market Theater (1983, #45) and the Oregon & Washington Investment and Trust Co. (1991, #79). More recently, spurred in part by development activities in the nearby Pearl District and in New Chinatown, a new round of major renovations and rehabilitations has been initiated; the Freimann Kitchen Building was restored in 2002 (#89) and other major projects currently underway or recently completed include the Smith Block (#96 and #78), the White Stag Building (#92), the Bickel Block (#91), the Blagen Block (#71) and the Freimann Restaurant Building (#84). While a number of resources have been lost, a cohesive collection of historic structures remains in the Skidmore/Old Town district and ongoing investments in renovation, restoration and rehabilitation promise to preserve the district’s resources for future generations. Together, they remind us not only of a “grand era” of commercial architecture, but of the critical role Portland played as a regional metropolis and the complex spatial and social shifts older Western port cities experienced as they matured.

Architectural Context and Significance

The Skidmore/Old Town Historic District is nationally significant for its exceptional mid-nineteenth to early twentieth-century commercial buildings. Its buildings reflect the evolution and diversity of design ideals and building practices evident in the United States during the period of significance. They present a broad range of commercial architectural styles that lend variety to the district’s urban character while also working in concert to create a cohesive and distinct historic sense of place. The district includes: elaborate, somewhat ethereal Victorian statements like the High Italianate Blagen Block (#71); transitional amalgams such as the Italianate-Sullivan-esque Skidmore Block (#72); solid Richardsonian Romanesque structures such as the Haseltine

¹³³ John Logan, *Oregonian*, September 7, 1930.

¹³⁴ Hawkins, *Grand Era*, 162.

¹³⁵ MacColl, *Growth of a City*, 529.

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Building (#36); and buildings exhibiting the cleaner lines and nascent functionalism of the early twentieth century Commercial and Utilitarian styles, as in the White Stag Building (#92). But the most noteworthy and defining elements of the district's historic character derive from its Victorian Era masonry and cast-iron buildings. This collection is one of the largest and best preserved in the American West. Use of architectural cast iron ranges from sparsely applied ornamental accents to full iron-fronted façades. Most of the cast-iron work is associated with Italianate buildings, but also appears in a few other stylistic modes, for example the Victorian Gothic style Oregon & Washington Trust building (#79). Skidmore/Old Town's cast-iron buildings, from the iconic New Market Theater (#45) and the Merchant Hotel (#12, #28) to less imposing "background" structures like the Portland Mariners' Home (#3) and the Fechheimer and White Building (#98) have long been noted not only for their individual beauty and rich contributions to Portland's built environment, but for their collective importance to the nation's architectural heritage.

Beyond their aesthetic value, the district's commercial buildings collectively express in architectural forms the success of early Portland's trade-centered economy and rise as a major urban center. The application of proto-prefabricated, cast-iron construction methods to the expressive Victorian styles evident in the district's commercial buildings constitutes an important West Coast reflection of nineteenth-century America's "Age of Enterprise." This complex historical era was characterized by: economic expansion and diversification; a spirit of entrepreneurialism, the rise of powerful corporations, managerial innovations and mass production; an increased pace of industrialization; rapid urbanization; and intensified exploitation of natural and human resources. In Portland, as in other cities across the country, the use of cast-iron architectural technology intersected with the adoption and adaptation of the Italianate and other European-influenced architectural styles, together providing industrial-age efficiency while satisfying the desires of building owners, businesses, civic boosters and designers for impressive and urbane downtown buildings and districts. Cast-iron building elements and the Italianate style are important historical markers of an increasingly specialized—and particularly commercial—form of architecture that anchored late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century business and trade districts throughout the country.¹³⁶

The cast-iron era spanned most of the nineteenth century in the United States, beginning slowly in the 1820s, accelerating in the 1850s, and peaking in the 1880s. The development and use of cast-iron building elements was a significant achievement in architecture and technology, coinciding with broad and complex shifts in America's economy, population and national identity away from a rural/agricultural orientation towards one that was increasingly urban and industrial. Cast iron captured the urban imagination in a way that few building materials had in the past, and was embraced by architects, building clients, journalists, and the general public.¹³⁷ Between 1850 and 1890, entire structures composed of modular cast-iron elements were prefabricated in foundries and shipped to building sites in cities and towns throughout the country, creating new urban spaces with a distinctly orderly and "modern" commercial flavor.

The apogee of the cast-iron era, between 1850 and 1890, also coincided with the settlement and development of the Far West and the rise of its first major urban centers, including Portland. This confluence allowed Portland to emerge as a key showcase for the architectural uses of cast iron. In his book *The Grand Era of Cast Iron Architecture in Portland*, William Hawkins notes: "the construction of the first 'Iron Front' in the United States

¹³⁶ Richard Longstreth, *The Buildings of Main Street* (Washington: The Preservation Press, 1987), 13-19; Leland Roth, *American Architecture: A History* (Boulder: Westview Press, 2001), 192, 211.

¹³⁷ Antoinette J. Lee, "Cast Iron in American Architecture: A Synoptic View," in *The Technology of Historic American Buildings: Studies of the Materials, Craft Processes, and the Mechanization of Building Construction*, ed. H. Ward Jandl (Washington: Foundation for Preservation Technology, 1983) 97.

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and the erection of the first house on the site of what was to become Portland took place in the same year – 1842. In the fifty years that followed, approximately 180 of the 200 brick commercial structures erected in Portland are known to have used cast iron structurally or decoratively.”¹³⁸

Although Portland’s cast-iron structures did not always reach the same scale or refinement of those in the largest eastern and Midwest cities, they did create a distinctive cityscape with a high degree of architectural sophistication. Portland’s business core, set alongside the Willamette River and encompassing today’s Skidmore/Old Town Historic District, was lined with rows of cast-iron fronted façades, together establishing a notable architectural unity that flowed from harmoniously arranged columns, arches and fenestration, on both full-block structures and buildings as narrow as 25 feet.¹³⁹

In Portland, use of cast-iron facilitated the adoption of Italianate and other revival styles that were emerging in commercial architecture in more-established cities “Back East.” The Victorian Italianate style and its variants elaborated on earlier Renaissance-influenced revivals with much emphasis put on the treatment of windows—especially through the use of various types of arches—and use of ornament that, in the words of Marcus Whiffen, ranged from “out-and-out naturalism to a stylization of already stylized classical forms.”¹⁴⁰ Characteristic features include masonry bearing walls, bracketed cornices, and use of architectural cast iron and pronounced moldings on the façades. The brick walls were left exposed or covered with stucco. Arched openings and segmentally arched windows on the upper stories and bracketed cornices along the roofline were other defining features of this style. Commonly, windows pierced brick walls, and the pier between the windows was treated as a pilaster or was stuccoed to suggest a wide column. Upper-floor window arches were often capped with iron keystones, and iron decorations were placed at the capitals of the pilasters or in the spandrel panels between the arches.¹⁴¹ Many of these buildings were of loft-type construction—creating flexible space usable for many retail, wholesale, warehouse, and manufacturing uses.

Portlanders’ decisions to use cast iron were pragmatic; prefabricated iron building parts could be erected more quickly than masonry, with fewer workmen and lower costs. The city’s merchant leaders were astute in business matters, many coming from Northeastern states where they would have been attuned to seeking out the newest developments in business practices and technology. From a broader perspective, the new and sophisticated design options expressed through cast iron created a means for the city’s aspiring architects, businessmen and political leaders to proclaim their cultural refinement and economic power, helping them to forge an urban and metropolitan environment that they self-consciously wished to differentiate from the “frontier” settings of the Far West.

The following sections discuss the historical development of architectural cast iron in the United States and Portland. A comparative analysis of selected remaining cast-iron building collections in other cities is also presented to provide a contextual background for understanding the significance of Portland’s Skidmore/Old Town Historic District.

Development of cast iron as an architectural material

¹³⁸ Hawkins, *Grand Era*, 12.

¹³⁹ The extant Fechheimer & White Building (#98) is one such narrow building with six-foot five inch arches, a span used on many larger buildings. These arches were cast in a single piece, a significant technical feat in 1870 (Hawkins, *Grand Era*, 146).

¹⁴⁰ Marcus Whiffen, *American Architecture Since 1780: A Guide to the Styles*, rev. ed. (1969; repr., Cambridge: MIT Press, 1992), 99.

¹⁴¹ Hawkins, *Grand Era*, 20.

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Architectural cast iron was one of the many technological innovations of the Industrial Revolution. Before the eighteenth century, cast iron was scarce and its uses were limited. In the early 1700s, cast iron was used in Britain and Europe for steam engine parts, bridge and rail components, and structural columns. By the late 1700s, Europeans had learned to appreciate the advantages of cast iron over traditional building materials such as wood and stone. It had fireproof qualities, performed well structurally as columns in buildings, and could be molded into shapes that were compatible with evolving architectural styles and structural requirements. But until the mid-eighteenth century, cast iron was too costly to make in large quantities. With the introduction of new furnace technology in England, it became increasingly economical and practical for use in building construction. Slender cast-iron pillars were introduced in English mill buildings as early as the 1790s, replacing flammable timber elements.

While European interest in cast iron as an architectural element began to decline by the 1850s, it was enthusiastically embraced in the United States beginning in the 1820s and accelerating in the 1850s. First prevalent in industrial settings, cast-iron was used in machinery, railroad equipment, and urban water systems and street lighting. Its earliest uses in construction were structural, for example bridge components and bearing columns in large public buildings like theaters. It also allowed for bold advances in architectural designs and new options for rich surface ornamentation. Cast iron's inherent plasticity and the casting process itself allowed easy replication of architectural parts that could be used in different settings—over-and-over again; this marked an important step in the historical trend away from hand-craftsmanship and artisan-based construction towards pre-fabrication, modularity, and standardized design.

By the mid-1820s, one-story, insertable iron storefronts were being sold in New York City, with advertisements emphasizing protection against theft and fire. Through the rest of the century, the iron storefront would become ubiquitous in towns and cities from coast to coast. This cost-effective innovation not only helped support the load of upper floors, but also allowed installation of large glass display windows, bringing natural light into shop interiors and creating new opportunities for product merchandizing and advertising, another aspect of business practice rapidly changing and expanding in this era.

Consistent with the impulse to adapt and innovate evident in nineteenth-century America, there were few implicit design “rules” governing how cast iron should be used, and it came to be applied for purposes well beyond what had been accepted abroad. Architects, businessmen, and foundry operators were encouraged to devise new uses for this adaptable material. In 1840, early promoters claimed it was cheaper, safer, and capable of “greater display of taste;” the new material was touted as a “new architecture” that would diverge from forms dictated by “bulky materials.”¹⁴²

Self-taught architect and engineer James Bogardus made a significant contribution to furthering cast iron use nationally. From 1840 on, he promoted its strength, stability, durability, lightness, affinity for casting in ornate shapes, and fire resistance. He also understood that the foundry casting processes were highly compatible with emerging industrial age-concepts of prefabrication, mass production, and use of identical interchangeable parts. In 1849, Bogardus is credited with erecting the first structure with self-supporting, multistoried exterior walls of iron, a building that was considered to be uniquely American.¹⁴³ The Laing Stores, in Manhattan, was a corner row of small four-story warehouses that looked like one building. It was remarkably completed in just two

¹⁴² Lee, “Cast Iron in America,” 97, 101

¹⁴³ John G. Waite, *Preservation Brief 27: The Maintenance and Repair of Architectural Cast Iron* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1991).

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months. The real innovation of the Laing Stores was two street façades of self-supporting cast iron, consisting of multiples of just a few pieces – Doric style engaged columns, panels, sills, and plates, along with applied ornaments. Each component was cast individually in a foundry and brought by horse cart to the building site, then hoisted into position, bolted together, and fastened with iron spikes and straps to the conventional timber and brick structure.

By the second half of the nineteenth century, economic, urban and territorial growth in the U.S. provided fertile conditions for spreading cast-iron use. Hundreds of iron fronts were erected in commercial and public building projects across the country. Along with exterior uses, many public buildings displayed ornamental and structural interior ironwork. Examples include the Peabody Library in Baltimore and the great dome of the U.S. Capitol, completed during the Civil War. Ornamental cast iron also proved to be a popular landscape material, appearing in fences, fountains, lampposts, furniture, etc. With such widespread demand, many foundries added architectural iron departments.

Cast iron continued to be the architectural metal of choice throughout the second half of the nineteenth century, for both practical and economic reasons. The largest standing example of framing with cast-iron columns (and wrought iron beams, which had greater tensile strength) is Chicago's sixteen-story Manhattan Building, the world's tallest skyscraper when constructed in 1890. By this time, however, steel was becoming available nationally, and because it was structurally more versatile and cost-competitive, it was increasingly favored. Nonetheless, cast iron continued to be used well into the twentieth century for various structural and ornamental purposes, including storefronts, large window frames, street and landscape furnishings, and subway kiosks.

With the advent of better construction materials, changes in architectural styles, and shifts in urban economies and development patterns, iron-front buildings nationwide began to be demolished in the early twentieth century, accelerating after World War II in a rush of downtown redevelopment projects. The area now designated as Portland's Skidmore/Old Town Historic District was no exception. However, a few significant collections do remain in selected cities, as well as more isolated examples, across the country.

Cast-iron architecture in Skidmore/Old Town

During the cast-iron era, Portland's business core, set alongside the Willamette River, was lined with rows of cast-iron fronted façades. These two- to four-story edifices were usually of brick construction, sometimes with wood and iron structural members, and their street faces were defined by decorative cast-iron elements ranging from modest adornments to ornate full-façade treatments. The earliest examples from the 1850s and 1860s, such as the 1857 Hallock and McMillen Building (#99) and the 1859 Delschneider Building (# 90), were smaller and more modest than the commercial palaces that followed in later decades.

The first iron elements used in Portland were obtained from San Francisco, where cast-iron construction had been utilized by the early 1850s (although cast iron was, from a relative standpoint, never as popular in San Francisco as it came to be in Portland). Its several foundries included the California Foundry, Fulton Iron Works, Sutter Iron Works, and the Phoenix Iron Works, which was represented locally by Portland's first architect, Absalom B. Hallock.¹⁴⁴ Hallock designed Portland's first brick commercial structure in 1853 (W. S. Ladd Building, no longer extant), and used the city's first iron pilaster columns on a structure he built for himself in 1857. The Hallock and McMillen Building still stands, although the exterior iron work is gone. The iron used on the exterior of the 1883 Bickel Block (#91) was made by Architectural Iron Works of San

¹⁴⁴ Hawkins, *Grand Era*, 16.

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Francisco, the western branch of the important early architectural iron foundry in New York established by Daniel Badger in 1842.

Beginning in 1864, Portland foundries, including the Willamette Iron Works and Honeyman's City Foundry, began producing cast-iron building elements and by 1867 were able to meet the increasing local demand for iron-fronted structures. The pattern designers for locally produced iron elements are not generally known, but wood carver and artisan John (Hans) Staehli is known to have sculpted the wooden forms for some of them, although it isn't clear which ones. Staehli emigrated from Switzerland to execute architectural details for structures at Johns Hopkins University. He later moved to San Francisco, designing building details for Stanford University, and eventually settled in Portland. He designed and executed a number of public art pieces here, including the Chiming Fountain in Washington Park and the large wooden figures of Atlas and Hermes that adorned the elaborate 1884 Kamm Block (demolished in 1939).¹⁴⁵

The face of the city gained a cosmopolitan air in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Front Street, lined for blocks with solid masonry and cast-iron structures, many exhibiting markedly similar iron patterns, bore little resemblance to the wooden village of the 1850s. The Smith Block of 1872 (# 95, #96) provides a glimpse of how the area must have looked, with row after row of unified façades. Smith Block is particularly noteworthy for displaying a specific cast-iron pattern, introduced in the late 1860s, that was repeated on at least nine other buildings along First and Front Streets, north of Pine. This pattern, which featured fluted Corinthian columns, coffered arches decorated with flower medallions, and spandrel panels with heads intertwined with foliage, was used over approximately 1,000 linear feet of building fronts and created an architectural unity in the district rarely seen in American cities. Such vistas inspired the *Oregonian* to write in 1871, "Many of these buildings are costly and of handsome and imposing appearance. We doubt if any city on the Pacific Coast can show anything like a parallel. The exhibit proves conclusively and in the most appreciable manner the rapid strides of our city toward wealth and greatness." Another remaining example of the rhythmic rows of columns and arches that once united block fronts in early Portland, and reportedly the largest intact cast-iron commercial building still standing on the West Coast, is the one-hundred foot front of the four-story High Italianate Blagen Block (# 71), designed in 1888 by noted architect Warren Williams.¹⁴⁶

In the 1880s, the growing city filled in the blocks between the Willamette River and Fourth Street until cast-iron columns lined almost every block. Notable buildings of the 1880s still standing in Portland include the 1880 Merchant Hotel (# 12, #28) and the 1888 Blagen Block (#71). The last structure in the City to use cast-iron pilasters and columns was the 1889 Glisan Building (# 48). Its decorations echoed the Modern Gothic style, with the addition of Art Nouveau elements. With this building, the cast-iron era in Portland came to a close.

Buildings from the late nineteenth and early twentieth century in the Richardsonian Romanesque and Commercial styles added a complementary layer to the district's rich architectural character. The Richardsonian Romanesque style began to replace the Italianate style beginning in the late 1880s, introducing an aesthetic that developed on the East Coast and was more suited to the era's increasingly tall structures. Walls were characterized by heavy brick and stone work rather than the more airy cast iron. The Art Nouveau style introduced decorative elements that looked more organic than applied. Examples of this new construction alongside existing cast-iron buildings include the Richardsonian Romanesque style New Market Annex of 1889 (# 46).

¹⁴⁵ Louise Aaron, "This Was Portland," *Oregon Journal*, September 16, 1956, 6A.

¹⁴⁶ Hawkins, *Grand Era*, 152.

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These compatible structures contribute to the historical and architectural significance of the district, but its earlier, primarily Italianate cast-iron buildings are what most distinguish it from other urban historic districts in the West. For instance, the Pioneer Square–Skid Road Historic District in Seattle, the city that would eventually surpass Portland as a “metropolis of the Pacific Northwest,” consists almost exclusively of buildings constructed after the fire of 1889, which destroyed most of that city’s much smaller collection of cast-iron structures. In San Francisco, despite its greater size and wealth, cast iron was comparatively less common than in Portland. Wooden construction predominated during the cast-iron era, a major factor in the catastrophic fire that followed the 1906 earthquake and consumed much of the city and many of its cast-iron buildings. A handful of cast-iron fronted buildings remain in the Jackson Square Historic District.¹⁴⁷

Finally, the Skidmore/Old Town Historic District is significant for its collection of important examples of the work of several of Oregon’s most distinguished nineteenth-century architects, including: Justus Krumbein (Bickel Block, 1883); Warren H. Williams (Blagen Block, 1888); Piper & Burton (New Market Theater, 1872); McCaw & Martin (New Market Annex, 1889); and Whidden & Lewis (Reed Building, 1890). The Skidmore Fountain, Portland’s oldest piece of public art and the historic district’s namesake, was completed in 1888 by New York sculptor Olin J. Warner and J. M. Wells, supervising architect.

Cast-iron manufacturing in the Portland area

Understanding the role of Portland cast-iron foundries and Oregon iron works¹⁴⁸ in the development of Skidmore/Old Town is helpful in evaluating its architectural and historical significance. Portland architect and cast-iron scholar William Hawkins, whose work informed this section, asserts that “the iron industry in Oregon was in every way analogous to the early growth and development of the state.”¹⁴⁹ The first iron smelted from raw ore on the Pacific Coast was produced in 1862 or 1863, when Dr. Aaron Knight Olds poured pig iron from a small blast furnace he constructed at Moores’s Mill on the Tualatin River, 12 miles south of Portland. Olds had come to Oregon in 1852, after erecting iron works in Michigan and helping to found what would become the great iron industry of the Lake Superior region. Although reportedly making “a superior article,” his Oregon iron works did not last long or produce large quantities of iron.¹⁵⁰ The state’s first iron foundry had been constructed next to the Clackamas River, near Oregon City in 1848, by English pioneer James Morfitt, who had moved west from Chicago after helping to build that city’s first iron foundry. A somewhat primitive

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 14; Karin Murr Link, “Pioneer Square—Skid Road Historic District,” National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 2006); Karen Gordon, Seattle Historic Preservation Officer, e-mail message to author, “Re: Seattle cast-iron,” March 23, 2006; N. Moses Corrette, City and County of San Francisco, e-mail message to author, “Re: Architectural cast-iron,” May 31, 2006.

¹⁴⁸ Terms describing iron industry plants, equipment and products are sometimes used imprecisely in both early and recent sources. Use of related terms in this nomination are based on the following general definitions: *foundry*, an establishment where raw iron is poured into molds to make finished castings (e.g. architectural columns or machine parts); *iron works*, an establishment where iron ore is smelted in a blast furnace, producing metallic iron through a chemical reduction process (most often using coke or charcoal) and separation of impurities as slag. The term “iron works” was also occasionally applied to iron foundries and *forges* (establishments for making wrought iron products); *pig iron*, rough bars of crude iron poured from a blast furnace into sand molds, an intermediary product used later to make finished products of cast iron, wrought iron or steel; *cast iron*, a strong but brittle iron derived from melting and further processing pig iron, and then casting it into molds to create finished products in a foundry.

¹⁴⁹ Hawkins, *Grand Era*, 188.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 189; “Obituary of Aaron Knight Olds,” ca. July 1896, unidentified Yamhill County newspaper, transcribed, <http://genforum.genealogy.com/olds/messages/437.html>.

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enterprise, it used iron from Canada and California to produce the first iron castings in the state. The first foundry in Portland began operation five years later.

Portland's earliest foundries produced primarily industrial and agricultural tools, machines and parts. The architectural iron for Portland's cast-iron buildings of the 1850s and early 1860s was not supplied locally; most of it was imported from San Francisco foundries in finished form. After the mid-1860s, the majority of iron fronts used in Portland were made by local foundries, at first using imported raw iron but soon relying on pig iron produced by the Oregon Iron Company and its successors, the Oswego Iron Company and the Oregon Iron and Steel Company, in the nearby town of Oswego. The Oswego iron works, financed by William Ladd, Simeon Reed and Henry Villard, operated from 1867 to 1894, smelting brown hematite or "limonite" ore from two nearby mines in charcoal-fueled blast furnaces. In its peak year of 1890, the Oregon Iron and Steel Company was the largest manufacturing operation in the state, employing 325 workers, producing 12,305 tons of pig iron, and supplying foundries throughout the Pacific Northwest and California, including 33 in Portland.¹⁵¹ Six Portland foundries played a prominent role in casting parts for iron-fronted buildings in Portland and Skidmore/Old Town.

The first of these foundries, the **Portland Foundry**, was established in 1853 on Front Street, near Morrison by Captain James Turnbull, H. W. Davis and David Monastes. Their pattern maker was Peter Taylor. The firm produced iron castings for agricultural and industrial use. In 1864 it began to produce the first architectural castings for commercial buildings in Portland. The Oregonian proudly noted, "this is the first work of the kind ever done in Oregon, and an examination of some of the castings already discloses the fact that they are of the first quality."¹⁵² The foundry remained in its original location on Front Street until 1867, when it moved to Second Street between Morrison and Alder. It remained in business until the great fire of 1873.

Oregon Iron Works was established in 1863 by A. C. Gibbs, Governor of Oregon between 1862 and 1866. The business was located in Skidmore/Old Town Historic District's 1859 Delschneider Building at 71 SW Oak Street (#90). Although Oregon Iron Works leased the building, cast-iron thresholds bearing the OIW mark were installed and these are still evident. The foundry relocated a couple of times, finally purchasing property at SW Front and Harrison Street. The property and some equipment were sold in 1873 to Smith Brothers' Iron Works, and the company attempted unsuccessfully to reorganize.

The third iron works established in the city was the **Willamette Iron Works**. It was incorporated in 1865. The city's first architect, A. B. Hallock, who had earlier brought to Portland architectural iron from San Francisco's Phoenix Iron Works, was among the first officers and stockholders. (Hallock is significant in Portland's history and in the development of Skidmore/Old Town for having constructed the earliest surviving building in downtown Portland, the 1857 Hallock and McMillen Building at 237 SW Front Avenue (#99). Willamette Iron Works was located on the levee below Davis Street. An 1866 advertisement proudly claimed that it manufactured "Building Fronts and castings of every description," with the "largest stock of patterns North of San Francisco." In 1869, the Portland Directory stated that "the Willamette Iron Works have turned out many large and elegant castings and machines which are equal in workmanship to any similar establishments in any country."¹⁵³ The company was quite prosperous. In 1882 it employed 80 men and produced iron worth \$200,000. At the turn of the century, the business became Willamette Iron and Steel Works and turned its focus

¹⁵¹ Susanna Campbell Kuo, Oswego Heritage Council, "A Brief History of the Oregon Iron Industry," <http://www.oswegoheritage.org/history.html>.

¹⁵² Hawkins, *Grand Era*, 189.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 191.

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to marine work.

In its earlier years, Willamette Iron Works produced cast iron for a large number of Portland buildings, including three that still exist in Skidmore/Old Town: the 1880 Merchant Hotel (#12, 28), the 1885 Fechheimer & White Building (#98), and the 1886 Failing Building (#67). It is likely that the company also supplied the 1888 Blagen Block (# 71). All are designated local landmarks in the district. Willamette Iron Works also produced material for the famed 1868 Ladd & Tilton Bank. Although demolished in 1954, the elaborate cast-iron façade was salvaged, and the parts were incorporated in 1967 into the rebuilt 1869 Ladd & Bush Bank, a nearly identical building in Salem, Oregon. The reassembled façades measure 165 feet and 102 feet, respectively, reportedly making it the largest cast-iron fronted structure on the West Coast, albeit not in its original state.

Smith Brothers Iron Works was established circa 1865 by Ferdinand and Charles Smith and began operation on First Street, near Salmon. They moved twice, finally locating at Front and Hall streets. In 1883 the name was changed to Smith & Watson Iron Works, and the firm operated until about 1890. By 1882 the firm was one of the largest in the city with ninety employees, however, there are few records of its work. It is known to have manufactured the iron work for the Canal and Lock Company of Oregon City which the City Directory noted was never surpassed as “superior iron work on the Pacific Coast.”¹⁵⁴ The perimeter iron rail around the National Historic Landmark Pioneer Courthouse (1875) has been attributed to this foundry.

The **City Foundry and Machine Shop** opened for business in 1871 at the corner of Front and Columbia streets. It was founded by Scotsman John Honeyman, a mechanical engineer and machinist, and his three sons. At peak times the foundry employed as many as 65 men. The business lasted until the death of John Honeyman in 1898. The Sinnott House (#6) at the northwest corner of Third and Couch features cast-iron pilasters on the first floor, most likely supplied by the City Foundry, since they are identical to identified cast-iron work on the Mikado Block in the nearby Yamhill Historic District. The iron-fronted Cully Building, located across the Willamette River in the former downtown of East Portland, still bears the company mark.

The **Union Iron Works** was the last known company to have produced iron fronts for Portland buildings. It was begun by Angus Campbell in 1879 and located on the southeast corner of Front and Main streets. By 1882, the business employed eighteen men. It was incorporated in 1885. The company produced its first iron front for the 1880 Harker Building, still standing in the Yamhill Historic District at 824 SW First Avenue.

Portland and Skidmore/Old Town cast-iron buildings in perspective

In her essay “Cast Iron in American Architecture: A Synoptic View,” Antoinette J. Lee defines a cast-iron building as “primarily a commercial structure with at least one story of cast-iron components in the façade – in other words, a façade which is defined more by cast iron components than by brick, stone, or timber.”¹⁵⁵ By this definition, thousands of cast-iron buildings were constructed in American cities and towns. Extant examples may be found in the majority of cities that experienced commercial growth during the cast-iron era, including Baltimore, New Orleans, Philadelphia, St. Louis, New York City and others in the eastern, southern and midwestern states, and Portland, San Francisco, Seattle and smaller cities in the West. Unfortunately, natural disasters and redevelopment have wiped out many of the larger concentrations in intervening decades.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 191.

¹⁵⁵ Lee, “Cast Iron in American Architecture,” 99.

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At one time Portland had approximately 180 cast-iron structures. The city's surviving collection is currently tallied by William Hawkins at 68 buildings that feature prominent decorative, structural, and/or re-built cast-iron.¹⁵⁶ Twenty of these buildings are located in the Skidmore-Old Town Historic District. They vary in height from two to four stories and were originally designed for commercial uses ranging from manufactories and warehouses to hotels, offices and stores. They are generally defined by: 1) a first-story façade featuring major cast-iron features, including pilasters and columns and/or bolted storefront components (sometimes structurally integrated with wood framing or supporting upper level masonry walls); and 2) upper stories with varying applications of attached cast-iron design features and ornament, often including window arches. Some feature interior iron elements, including structural columns and post connections.

As a group or collection, Portland's cast-iron buildings merit comparison with that of other cities.¹⁵⁷ No comprehensive national study of cast-iron architecture has been identified. However, there are several cities in addition to Portland, that still have a number of buildings identified by cast-iron elements. In order to place Portland in a national context, the cast iron collections of a few such cities are briefly described below.¹⁵⁸

Baltimore, Maryland

Baltimore currently has 23 cast-iron buildings. Since 1991, four cast-iron structures have been demolished and one was reconstructed as a museum façade.¹⁵⁹ As was typical in many larger American cities with sizable numbers of cast-iron buildings, many of Baltimore's structures are five to six stories tall. Their original use was mainly as commercial structures and warehouses.¹⁶⁰ Current uses run the gamut from restaurants and galleries to offices, apartments, and housing for the homeless. Perhaps most noteworthy is the Sun Iron Building. With "two full iron façades and an internal support system of cast-iron columns and beams," it was the first large-scale commercial use of the all-iron construction method developed by James Bogardus, considered the inventor of the cast-iron front.¹⁶¹

Louisville, Kentucky

Approximately 95 buildings with some cast iron on the primary façade, including several buildings with façades constructed entirely of cast-iron, grace Louisville's West Main Street Preservation District. Most of these structures are three to four stories tall, and a few are six stories. Their original uses were as warehouses,

¹⁵⁶ Hawkins, *Grand Era*, 12. Hawkins' criteria includes recent restorations, hidden cast-iron decoration, and surviving buildings which once sported such decoration and to which original or replica cast-iron decoration could be replaced. See also City of Portland, *Historic Resources Inventory*, 1984.

¹⁵⁷ So palpable is Portland's cast-iron tradition that some have indicated it compares only to the much larger collection in New York's SoHo Cast-Iron Historic District (NHL, 1978) in size. See Hawkins, *Grand Era*, 14; Margot Gayle, *Cast Iron Architecture in New York: A Photographic Survey* (New York: Dover Publications, 1974) xiv; *Louisville Landmarks Commission Design Guidelines, West Main Street Preservation District* (Louisville: Louisville Landmarks Commission, n.d.), 1. Maintained largely in the mid-1970s, these assertions were made when few if any cities, excluding New York and Portland, had undertaken surveys of their surviving cast-iron structures. Imprecise use of terms within the architectural history and preservation communities, and the lack of a comprehensive national survey of cast iron architecture, continues to make inter-city comparative analysis difficult.

¹⁵⁸ Cities identified based on correspondence with selected SHPOs and other preservation organizations; the National Register of Historic Places "research" web site: <http://www.nps.gov/nr/research/> and other online sources; and a review of available secondary literature.

¹⁵⁹ James D. Dilts and Catharine F. Black, eds., *Baltimore's Cast-Iron Buildings and Architectural Ironwork* (Centerville, MD: Tidewater Publishers, 1991).

¹⁶⁰ "Cast Iron Architecture of Baltimore, Maryland, 1850-1904," National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1994).

¹⁶¹ James D. Dilts, "Introduction," in *Baltimore's Cast-Iron Buildings and Architectural Ironwork*, ed. James D. Dilts and Catharine F. Black (Centerville, MD: Tidewater Publishers, 1991), 7.

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distilleries, saddle and harness makers, and outfitters for Ohio River journeys. Today, these buildings house a mix of offices, galleries, cultural centers, and retail uses. Overall, the West Main Street District's cast-iron buildings are considered to be in "excellent" condition. In addition, Louisville has many cast-iron commercial storefronts with commercial uses above.¹⁶²

New York City, New York

Of the nearly 500 buildings within the boundaries of New York's SoHo Cast-Iron Historic District (NHL, 1978), some 139 are iron-fronted.¹⁶³ In addition, estimates list the greater Manhattan area's total between 250 and 300. Generally taller than Portland's examples many of New York's cast-iron buildings range from four to six stories. Many of the buildings bear the mark of important architects and designers. There are a few taller buildings in the group, consisting mainly of late cast-iron examples, buildings that had stories added, and buildings with rudimentary iron framing anticipating twentieth-century steel skyscrapers.¹⁶⁴ The SoHo collection is arguably the nation's largest cast-iron ensemble.

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Unofficial counts estimate Philadelphia's number of buildings with cast-iron façades between 150 and 200. These structures include both storefronts and entire façades, and they are generally located within the Old City Historic District -- touted as "one of the country's greatest collection of cast-iron and industrial loft buildings." Most of the structures were built between 1850 and 1890 and almost all are four to five stories tall. Originally serving as industrial buildings with storefronts on the first floor and storage or manufacturing in the upper floors, most have been converted into residential units on the upper floors. Many of these buildings are the work of significant builders and designers.¹⁶⁵

San Francisco, California

Despite its early development and urban supremacy on the West Coast, San Francisco has surprisingly little cast-iron architecture. Although a large number of cast iron-fronted buildings were built, some as high as six stories, wood and masonry construction methods predominated in the city during the mid- to late 1800s, and most of the cast-iron buildings that were constructed perished in the earthquake and fire of 1906. There are an estimated dozen cast-iron façades in the city primarily in the Jackson Square Historic District, and a larger number of buildings with more limited exterior applications.¹⁶⁶

Seattle, Washington

There is no official count of Seattle's cast-iron buildings. However, the May 2006 draft updated National Register nomination for the Pioneer Square-Skid Road Historic District indicates there are roughly 20 buildings that feature some exterior cast iron, but the majority of these are not defined by cast-iron façades or major ornamentation, many containing just simple iron structural columns. None of them ante-date the city's major 1889 fire that wiped out much of its primarily wooden building stock and much smaller collection of Victorian

¹⁶² Joanne Weeter, Louisville Metro Historic Preservation Officer, e-mail message to author: "Re: Louisville cast iron," March 23, 2006. See also: *Louisville Landmarks Commission Design Guidelines, West Main Street Preservation District*.

¹⁶³ John G. Waite, AIA, and Margot Gayle, *Preservation Brief 27: The Maintenance and Repair of Architectural Cast Iron* - Technical Preservation Services (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1991), <http://www.nps.gov/hps/tps/briefs/brief27.htm>; "SoHo Cast-Iron Historic District," National Register of Historic Places Inventory Form (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1974).

¹⁶⁴ Gayle, *Cast Iron Architecture in New York*, iv.

¹⁶⁵ Laura Spina, Philadelphia City Planning Commission, e-mail message to author, "Re: Philadelphia cast iron," March 23, 2006; *The Old City Historic District: A Guide for Property Owners* (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Historical Commission, ca.1995).

¹⁶⁶ N. Moses Corrette, City and County of San Francisco, e-mail message to author, "Re: Architectural cast-iron," May 31, 2006.

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cast-iron buildings. Like Portland's collection, Seattle's buildings originally housed a variety of commercial uses, including hotels, manufacturers, and financiers. Today, many are used as restaurants and retail establishments.¹⁶⁷

St. Louis, Missouri

St. Louis once had one of the largest collections of multi-story cast-iron fronted buildings in the country. As in so many cities, the vast majority have been demolished, many lost when 39 city blocks were cleared in 1939-1941 for construction of the Gateway Arch. Two six-story cast-iron fronted buildings remain in the central city, but the fine large commercial structures of the original central business district and riverfront are lost.

However, perhaps as many as one-thousand complete or partial cast-iron storefronts remain scattered about the city's neighborhoods and on short commercial strips, indicating that St. Louis has perhaps the most extensive if not concentrated collections of single-story cast-iron storefronts in the nation. The St. Louis Building Arts Foundation possesses a large collection of salvaged architectural cast iron, including 135 storefronts, a seven-story façade, and numerous cast-iron building elements.¹⁶⁸

In summary, preliminary research suggests that New York's SoHo Cast Iron Historic District has the largest concentrated collection of multi-story cast-iron buildings, followed by Philadelphia. Louisville and Baltimore also retain impressive collections of multi-storied cast-iron buildings. St. Louis most likely has largest number of single-story storefronts but they are scattered and very few larger buildings defined by cast-iron façades remain. It appears that Portland can lay claim to significant, if not primary standing on the West Coast in terms of the number of surviving structures depending on how the term "cast-iron building" is defined. The Skidmore Old/Town Historic District collection is clearly of national significance when viewed as a cohesive concentration of cast-iron buildings. A comprehensive inventory and comparative analysis of the nation's cast-iron architectural heritage is overdue.

Designation History and Updated Documentation of a National Historic Landmark

The following is a brief summary of Skidmore/Old Town's historic designation history, including information about the intent and findings of this major update of its National Historic Landmark nomination.

Efforts to officially recognize and institute protections for Portland's "Old Town" go back to at least 1962, when a 15-block "Design Zone" for the Skidmore Fountain area (sometimes referred to as the "Fountain Village" area) was established by City ordinance. With the passage of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, public appreciation of preservation values was heightened nationally and locally. Spurred, in part, by the "overnight" demolition of the Ladd Block at SW Second and Columbia in 1966, concerned Portland citizens, including architects and preservationists such as George McMath, William J. Hawkins, III, Gene Westberg, Andy Rocchia and Al Staehli (grandson of sculptor and cast-iron form designer John Staehli), initiated a concerted effort to raise awareness of the city's architectural heritage, leading to the creation of Portland's first preservation ordinance in 1968. It established the Portland Historic Landmarks Commission, a local landmark designation process, and preservation zoning protections. As its first official project, the newly formed Landmarks Commission inventoried structures of potential significance and in October 1969, chose thirteen buildings in the area around the Skidmore Fountain as its first submission to the City Council for consideration as "Historical Landmarks." The Council accepted the recommendation and the thirteen properties were adopted

¹⁶⁷ Link, "Pioneer Square—Skid Road Historic District."; Karen Gordon, Seattle Historic Preservation Officer, e-mail message to author, "Re: Seattle cast-iron," March 23, 2006.

¹⁶⁸ Larry Giles, St. Louis Building Arts Foundation, e-mail messages "Re: St Louis Cast Iron," June 15-16, 2006.

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as Portland's first designated local landmarks on December 3, 1969.¹⁶⁹ Recognizing the significance of the area's resources as a cohesive ensemble of historic masonry and cast-iron commercial buildings, the City Council created the 20-block Skidmore/Old Town Historic District on September 11, 1975, which, together with the concurrently created Yamhill Historic District, became the city's first.¹⁷⁰

Interest in Skidmore/Old Town at the state and federal level was also high. On December 6, 1975, the district was nominated to the National Register of Historic Places, becoming Portland's first district so recognized. The nomination prepared by Greg Olsen and Robert Sutton cited the significance of both its historical associations with the city's early growth and commercial activity and its outstanding architectural values, expressed particularly in its late nineteenth-century brick and cast-iron structures.¹⁷¹ On May 5, 1977, the district was elevated to National Historic Landmark status.¹⁷² No major new documentation of the district's resources or significance appears to have been prepared at that time. The 1977 National Historic Landmark nomination is a slightly revised version of the 1975 National Register nomination.

Although the 1975 and 1977 nominations were prepared consistent with the standards of the time, a number of shortcomings, stemming primarily from their brevity, have been identified. A lack of detail has made it difficult to develop and apply preservation protections, such as district-specific design guidelines, as well as educational and interpretive material. After consulting with the Oregon State Historic Preservation Office and the National Park Service, the Portland Bureau of Planning agreed to update the nomination following current standards for National Historic Landmark documentation. Overall, the intent of this updated documentation is to broadly reexamine the district's physical, architectural and historical contexts, expand and update documentation of its individual properties, and provide additional historical and architectural analysis. This nomination form and its supporting appendices are the result of that effort. They will supersede the 1975 and 1977 nominations as the principal National Historic Landmarks Survey and National Register of Historic Places documentation of the Skidmore/Old Town Historic District's physical characteristics and historical and architectural significance.

This update further develops the historical and architectural descriptions and themes included in the 1975 and 1977 nominations—clarifying, expanding upon, and in some cases correcting, their component parts. For instance, the period of historical significance was evaluated and established as beginning in 1857, with the construction of the earliest extant structure, and ending in 1929, with the construction of the Willamette River seawall.¹⁷³ In addition, as a result of new research and fieldwork and the application of current evaluation standards, the contributing/non-contributing status of a few of the properties has been changed, correcting errors, conforming to the period of significance, and reflecting alterations and rehabilitation of structures since 1975.

While falling outside the period of significance and National Historic Landmark Themes of this nomination, the ongoing story of preservation and rehabilitation efforts in Skidmore/Old Town adds an important layer to the

¹⁶⁹ City of Portland Ordinance No. 139148.

¹⁷⁰ City of Portland Ordinances Nos. 140311 and 140593.

¹⁷¹ Greg Olsen and Robert Sutton, "Skidmore/Old Town Historic District," National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form, (Washington, DC U.S. Department of the Interior, 1975).

¹⁷² Elizabeth Potter, "Portland Skidmore/Old Town Historic District National Landmark Dedication, May 12, 1979," Dedication speech, Oregon State Historic Preservation Office files, May 16, 1979.

¹⁷³ The 1975 National Register nomination indicates 1872-1930 in the space for "Specific Dates" in Section 8; no dates are specified on the 1977 National Historic Landmark nomination form.

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district's overall significance. This history nicely encapsulates the broader story of the ebb and flow of neglect, demolition, renovation and conservation in historic city centers, as well as the trajectory of the preservation movement in Portland. This might be further explored and documented through a future amendment to this nomination, under the National Historic Landmark theme "Expressing Cultural Values" and the "Conservation" area of significance.

CONCLUSION

Beginning in 1857 with the erection of the brick and cast-iron Hallock and McMillen Building, the earliest surviving structure in the Skidmore/Old Town Historic District and one of the oldest in the city, and extending over the next three decades, Portland solidified its position as the primary urban center of the Northwest. Built on the foundation of its trade-centered economy, Skidmore/Old Town as a part of the city's commercial core along and near the Willamette River highway, was central to this role.

Portland's pioneer merchant-entrepreneurs, speculating and capitalizing on the city's strategic location at the head of ocean-going navigation on the Willamette River and its connection to the greater Columbia River system, transformed it from a stump-strewn clearing to the cultural, financial, trade and transportation hub of the Pacific Northwest—second only to San Francisco as a "metropolis" of the Far West. Its mercantile houses, commission agents, steamship companies and financial institutions, clustered along Front and First streets in and near the present Skidmore/Old Town Historic District, supplied the goods, services and trade connections that not only supported the development of western Oregon, but that of the greater Pacific Slope region. Skidmore/Old Town's historic commercial buildings memorialize Portland's position as a commercial entrepôt that linked a large dependant hinterland to national and global economic systems, and highlight the sometimes under-emphasized role of key urban centers in facilitating the settlement and development of the western United States.

The Skidmore/Old Town Historic District is also significant for the exceptional architectural values of its mid- and late-nineteenth-century cast-iron commercial buildings—one of the finest collections in the nation and perhaps the most outstanding in the Far West. These two- to four-story primarily Italianate structures work in concert with sympathetically scaled and designed late nineteenth-century Richardsonian Romanesque and early twentieth-century buildings to define its rich urban character. With elaborate decorative elements echoing Italian Renaissance designs, Skidmore/Old Town's "Commercial Palaces" notably contribute to Portland's architectural distinctiveness and collectively reflect both the economic success of its early businesses, and the high cultural aspirations of its citizens and leaders.

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Tables**Table 1: Population of Selected Western Cities**

City	1850	1860	1870	1880	1890	1900	1910	1920
<i>Pacific Northwest</i>								
Boise	—	1,658*	995	1,899	2,311	5,957	17,358	21,393
Portland	821	2,874	8,293	17,577	46,385	90,426	207,214	258,288
Seattle	—	150**	1,107	3,553	42,837	80,871	237,174	315,312
Spokane	—	—	29**	350**	19,922	36,848	104,402	104,437
Tacoma	—	—	73**	1,098	36,006	37,714	83,743	96,965
Vancouver BC [†]	—	—	—	400	13,709	26,133	95,235	117,217
Victoria BC [†]	—	2,350	3,630	7,295	17,998	20,919	31,660	38,727
Walla Walla	—	722	1,394	3,588	4,709	10,049	19,364	15,503
<i>California</i>								
Los Angeles	1,610	4,385	5,728	11,183	50,395	102,479	319,198	576,673
Oakland	—	1,543	10,500	34,555	48,682	66,960	150,174	216,261
Sacramento	6,820	13,785	16,283	21,420	26,386	29,282	44,696	65,908
San Francisco	34,870	56,802	149,473	233,959	298,997	342,782	416,912	506,676
<i>Interior West</i>								
Denver	—	4,749	4,759	35,629	106,713	133,859	213,381	256,491
Salt Lake City	6,157 ^{††}	8,236	12,854	20,768	44,843	53,531	92,777	118,110

Where no figure is provided, data is not readily available or population is zero.

*Figure is for 1864.

**Approximate

[†]Vancouver and Victoria figures are for 1861, 1871, 1881, etc., except for 1880 figure for Vancouver which is approximate population in 1885.

^{††}Figure is for Salt Lake County, 1850 Census does not include data below the County level for Utah.

Sources: U.S. Census; Carlos Schwantes, *The Pacific Northwest*; www.usa.worldweb.com; www.abag.ca.gov; www.nps.gov; www.vihistory.ca; www.statcan.ca; history.mala.bc.ca; www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca; www.rootsweb.com/~canbc.

Table 2: Population Change of Selected Western Cities

City	1880-1890		1890-1900		1900-1910		1910-1920	
	Number	%Δ	Number	% Δ	Number	% Δ	Number	% Δ
Portland	28,808	164%	44,041	95%	116,788	129%	51,074	25%
Seattle	39,284	1106%	38,034	89%	156,303	193%	78,138	33%
San Francisco	65,038	28%	43,785	15%	74,130	22%	89,764	22%

Source: U.S. Census.

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Table 3: Value of Domestic & Foreign Exports from Portland

Year	Foreign Exports	% of All Exports	Domestic Exports	% of All Exports	All Exports
1870-71	\$531,000	—	—	—	—
1871-72	\$573,000	—	—	—	—
1872-73	\$929,000	—	—	—	—
1873-74	\$1,949,000	—	—	—	—
1874-75	\$1,673,000	—	—	—	—
1875-76	\$2,487,000	—	—	—	—
1876-77	\$2,527,000	—	—	—	—
1877-78	\$3,975,000	—	—	—	—
1878-79	\$3,105,000	—	—	—	—
1879-80	\$4,097,000	—	—	—	—
1880-81	\$3,083,000	—	—	—	—
1881-82	\$6,486,000	52.4%	\$5,900,000	47.6%	\$12,386,000
1882-83	\$3,655,000	36.4%	\$6,383,000	63.6%	\$10,038,000
1883-84	\$4,383,000	42.2%	\$6,014,000	57.8%	\$10,397,000
1884-85	\$4,142,000	38.2%	\$6,700,000	61.8%	\$10,842,000
1885-86	\$5,737,000	37.7%	\$9,481,000	62.3%	\$15,218,000
1886-87	\$5,135,000	35.1%	\$9,508,000	64.9%	\$14,643,000
1887-88	\$4,619,000	34.5%	\$8,788,000	65.5%	\$13,407,000
1888-89	\$4,859,000	35.7%	\$8,763,000	64.3%	\$13,622,000
1889-90	\$3,371,000	—	—	—	—

Where no figure is provided, comparable data is not readily available.

Source: Paul G. Merriam, *Portland, Oregon, 1840-1890: A Social and Economic History* (PhD diss., University of Oregon, 1971).

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Table 4: Value of Foreign Wheat & Flour Exports from Portland

Year	All Foreign Exports	Foreign Wheat & Flour Exports	% of Foreign Exports
1870-71	\$531,000	\$457,000	86.1%
1871-72	\$573,000	\$500,000	87.3%
1872-73	\$929,000	\$888,000	95.6%
1873-74	\$1,949,000	\$1,855,000	95.2%
1874-75	\$1,673,000	\$1,614,000	96.5%
1875-76	\$2,487,000	\$2,348,000	94.4%
1876-77	\$2,527,000	\$2,463,000	97.5%
1877-78	\$3,975,000	\$3,651,000	91.8%
1878-79	\$3,105,000	\$2,937,000	94.6%
1879-80	\$4,097,000	\$4,034,000	98.5%
1880-81	\$3,083,000	\$3,009,000	97.6%
1881-82	\$6,486,000	\$6,413,000	98.9%
1882-83	\$3,655,000	\$3,623,000	99.1%
1883-84	\$4,383,000	\$4,372,000	99.7%
1884-85	\$4,142,000	\$4,041,000	97.6%
1885-86	\$5,737,000	\$5,716,000	99.6%
1886-87	\$5,135,000	\$5,096,000	99.2%
1887-88	\$4,619,000	\$4,598,000	99.5%
1888-89	\$4,859,000	\$4,815,000	99.1%
1889-90	\$3,371,000	\$3,262,000	96.8%

Source: Paul G. Merriam, *Portland, Oregon, 1840-1890: A Social and Economic History* (PhD diss., University of Oregon, 1971).

Table 5: Volume of Wheat & Flour Shipped in 1910, by Port Region

Port Region	Wheat (Bushels)	% of Total	Flour (Barrels)*	% of Total
Columbia River	6,339,972	41.9%	556,113	27.9%
Puget Sound	8,787,752	58.1%	1,439,398	72.1%
Total	15,127,724	100 %	1,995,511	100.0%

* Because each barrel of flour represents about 4.5 bushels of grain, the equivalent total product shipped from Puget Sound was almost double that of the Columbia.

Source: D. W. Meinig, *The Great Columbia Plain: A Historical Geography, 1805-1910* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1995).

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Table 6: Portland & Oregon Foreign-Born Population, 1850-1910

Year	Portland			Oregon	
	Number	As % of Port.	As % of OR F-B	Number	As % of OR
1850	51	6.2%	4.4%	1,022	8.7%
1860	728	25.3%	14.2%	5,123	9.8%
1870	2,578	31.1%	22.2%	11,600	12.8%
1880	6,312	35.9%	20.7%	30,563	17.5%
1890	17,323	37.3%	30.2%	57,317	18.3%
1900	25,876	28.6%	20.7%	65,749	15.9%
1910	50,312	24.3%	30.2%	113,136	16.8%

Source: Paul G. Merriam, "The 'Other Portland:' A Statistical Note on the Foreign-Born," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 80, no. 3 (Fall 1979); U.S. Census.

Table 7: Portland Foreign-Born Population, by Selected Nation of Birth, 1890

Nation	Number	% of Pop.	% of F-B
China	4,438	9.6%	25.6%
Germany	3,652	7.9%	21.1%
Great Britain	2,065	4.5%	11.9%
Ireland	1,638	3.5%	9.5%
Sweden	1,312	2.8%	7.6%
Canada	1,238	2.7%	7.1%
Norway	704	1.5%	4.1%
Russia	359	0.8%	2.1%
Switzerland	403	0.9%	2.3%
France	305	0.7%	1.8%
Denmark	300	0.6%	1.7%
Italy	267	0.6%	1.5%
Other Nations	642	1.4%	3.7%
Total Foreign	17,323	37.3%	100.0%
Native-born	29,062	62.7%	—
For. Parentage*	26,992	58.2%	—

* Persons with one or both parents foreign-born.

Source: U.S. Census; Paul G. Merriam. *Portland, Oregon, 1840-1890: A Social and Economic History* (PhD diss., University of Oregon, 1971).

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Table 8: Percent of Foreign-Born Population of Selected Western Cities, 1890

City	% F-B
San Francisco CA	42.4%
San Jose CA	37.7%
Portland OR	37.4%
Seattle WA	31.9%
Oakland CA	29.9%
Salt Lake City	29.7%
Stockton CA	29.2%
Sacramento CA	29.1%
Los Angeles CA	25.3%
Denver CO	23.9%

Source: Paul G. Merriam, *Portland, Oregon, 1840-1890: A Social and Economic History* (PhD diss., University of Oregon, 1971).

Table 9: Portland & Oregon African-American Population, 1850-1890

Year	Portland			Oregon	
	Number	As % of Port.	As % of OR A-F	Number	As % of OR
1850	4	0.5%	2.0%	207	1.6%
1860	16	0.6%	12.5%	128	0.2%
1870	147	1.8%	40.2%	346	0.4%
1880	182	1.1%	39.2%	487	0.3%
1890	480	1.0%	40.4%	1,186	0.4%
1900	775	0.9%	70.1%	1,105	0.3%

Source: U.S. Census; Paul G. Merriam, *Portland, Oregon, 1840-1890: A Social and Economic History* (PhD diss., University of Oregon, 1971).

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Informal Personal Communications

A number of Portland-area architects, historians, and preservation professionals provided important information through discussions, email exchanges and written comments on earlier drafts of this nomination. Though of a more-or-less informal nature, these communications provided direction, new facts, clarification and corrections critical to this document. Individuals providing such assistance include: Robert Dortignacq, architect and Chair of the Portland Historic Landmarks Commission; Richard Engeman, member of the Historic Landmarks Commission and public historian; Rob Mawson, preservation consultant with Heritage Consulting Group; Art DeMuro and Jessica Engeman of Venerable Properties; Al Staehli, architect and preservationist; John Russell, Old Town property owner, developer and former member of the Portland Historic Landmarks Commission; and especially, architect and preservationist William J. Hawkins, III, whose published works, personal files and knowledge of Portland's built heritage and history was invaluable.

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

Preliminary Determination of Individual Listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.

Previously Listed in the National Register: Portland Skidmore/Old Town Historic District (12/6/1975)

Previously Determined Eligible by the National Register.

Designated a National Historic Landmark. (May 5, 1977)

Recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey: HABS OR-51 (New Market Block & Theatre)

Recorded by Historic American Engineering Record:

Primary Location of Additional Data:

State Historic Preservation Office

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 Other State Agency Federal Agency Local Government: City of Portland, Oregon University Other (Specify Repository): Oregon Historical Society; Multnomah County Library; University of Oregon Library**10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

Acreage of Property: 42.5 acres

UTM References:	Zone	Easting	Northing
A	10	525448	5041321
B	10	525838	5041332
C	10	525466	5040708
D	10	525857	5040718

Verbal Boundary Description

Both the 1975 National Register and the 1977 National Historic Landmark nomination forms for the Skidmore/Old Town Historic District included maps showing district boundaries consistent with those specified for the local historic district established by City of Portland Ordinance # 140593 (September 1975). Neither nomination included a verbal boundary description. No changes are proposed in this updated nomination to the established boundary as described below and shown on attached maps M1 and M2.

In the State of Oregon, County of Multnomah, City of Portland, begin at a point at the northwest corner of Lot 4, Block 27 of Couch's Addition to the City of Portland; proceed thence in a southerly direction along the west line of Lots 4 and 1 of said Block 27 and the west line of Lots 8, 5, 4, and 1 of Block 28 to the southwest corner of Lot 1, Block 28; thence in a southerly direction to a point on the north line of Lot 7, Block 29 of Couch's Addition, 95 feet east of the northwest corner of said Lot 7, Block 29; thence in a southerly direction to a point 22 feet south and 5 feet west of the northwest corner of Lot 4, Block 29 of Couch's Addition; thence in an easterly direction 5 feet to a point on the west line of Lot 4, Block 29 of Couch's Addition, 28 feet north of the southwest corner of said Lot 4, Block 29; thence in a southerly direction along the west line of Lots 4 and 1 to the centerline of West Burnside Street; thence in an easterly direction along said centerline to its intersection with the centerline of NW/SW 3rd Avenue; thence in a southerly direction along the centerline of SW 3rd Avenue to its intersection with the centerline of SW Ash Street; thence in a southwesterly direction continuing along the centerline of SW 3rd Avenue to its intersection with the centerline of SW Pine Street; thence in a southeasterly direction along the centerline of SW Pine Street to its intersection with the centerline of SW Second Avenue; thence in a southwesterly direction along the centerline of SW Second Avenue to its intersection with the centerline of SW Oak Street; thence in a southeasterly direction along the centerline of SW Oak Street to its intersection with the centerline of SW First Avenue; thence in a southwesterly direction along the centerline of SW First Avenue to a point midway between SW Oak Street and SW Stark Street; thence in a

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southeasterly direction along the south line of Blocks 7 and 2 of Block 40 of PORTLAND and continuing in a southeasterly direction along the south line of Lot 2 of Block 80 to the harbor line; thence in a northerly direction along the harbor line to a point where it intersects the north line of Lots 3 and 4 of Blocks 7, 14, and 17 of Couch's Addition; thence in a westerly direction along said north line of Lots 3 and 4 of Blocks 7, 14, and 17, to the point of beginning.

Boundary Justification

No boundary justification was provided on either the 1975 National Register or 1977 National Historic Landmark nomination forms. The boundaries of the Skidmore/Old Town Historic District were drawn to include a significant concentration of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century commercial buildings that collectively establish a distinct historic sense of place and memorialize Portland's early commercial core. Historical, visual, and physical factors determined the boundaries. Historic factors include early and subsequent development patterns, building uses and associations. Visual factors include consistency in building styles, height, scale, massing, and setback. Physical factors include the layout of streets and property lines, and geographical features. The area to the east of the historic district is defined by the Willamette River. The area to the south and southwest is dominated by generally larger downtown buildings constructed after the period of significance. The area to the west and northwest is defined by the adjacent National Register-listed New Chinatown/Japantown Historic District. The area to the north contains a mixture of newer buildings, vacant and redeveloping land and industrial/rail facilities.

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DESIGNATED A NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK

May 5, 1977

REVISED DOCUMENTATION

October 6, 2008